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**International Icons or Local Landmarks?: popular
perceptions of the visual culture of regeneration in
Birmingham**

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International Icons or Local Landmarks? 2

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Abstract

This paper examines the manner in which local residents in Birmingham perceive major regeneration projects in the city. It focuses upon the visual culture of regeneration and investigates the extent to which people support and accept new architectural forms alongside the more established elements of the built environment. The trend toward the use of 'iconic' architecture to sell the city to an external audience is of particular relevance, and this paper attempts to measure the degree to which the public accept the new supposed icons as local symbols representing local people, rather than symbols of the elite cultural or economic profile of the city. An understanding of the apparent acceptance of the necessity of such iconic constructions also leads to insights into the willingness of local people to accept elite entrepreneurial policies and the rhetoric of selling the city to a global audience, despite a possible lack of relevance to residents of the city.

Evidence has been based upon the comments received from a series of in depth interviews with a variety of people from a range of social, ethnic and age groups, across the city, conducted in July 2008. By obtaining better understanding of the manner in which people relate to new regeneration projects visually this paper concludes that there is a widespread acceptance and pride behind most schemes; however the most successful flagship projects in the eyes of local people are those that carefully endorse existing civic spaces and historic areas of the city that hold existing meanings and memories for locals, rather newer iconic buildings which appear exclusive and disrespectful of context and surroundings. Despite this however, there is a widespread support for bold projects as people believe that they are vital to achieve international success, even if they will not directly benefit from the new amenities.

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1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the scope and aims of this research of project, set against the context of flagship cultural regeneration in UK cities. It also identifies the relevance of the project and the contributions that such research can make to the better understanding of the social impact of entrepreneurial culture led growth policies backed by local authorities.

1.1 FLAGSHIP CULTURAL REGENERATION: THE UK CONTEXT

Since the early 1980's Britain's major cities have been coming to terms with a legacy of economic decline and manufacturing job losses. Forced to re-invent themselves in the wake of the shifting structure of the global economy, many cities have turned to cultural regeneration policies in attempt to attract greater numbers of visitors, tourists and external business investment (Evans, 2003). The expectation of these strategies is that the whole city will benefit from new direct investment, and the local population will benefit from the trickle down effect and the creation of new jobs. Alongside the creation of cultural quarters, arts projects and themed environmental improvements, local authorities have aimed to increase the cultural profile of their cities and increase their desirability as places of consumption through investing heavily in 'flagship' projects such as sports stadia, concert halls and conference centres (Porter & Barber, 2007, Evans, 2003). Flagships such as Newcastle's Baltic arts centre, Liverpool's Albert Dock or Birmingham's Bull Ring are particularly significant as they can act as symbols of an apparent urban renaissance and important drivers of city image transformation. Through the construction of Flagships the city is thus able to advertise itself to the outside world as a desirable location in which to indulge in consumer culture, bringing in new people and investment.

There have been many criticisms of flagship cultural regeneration strategies that have questioned the supposed economic benefits of such costly projects to many sections of the local population (Doucet, 2007, Porter & Barber, 2007, Smith, 2006, Miles and Paddison, 2005, Evans 2005). There have also been more recently questions raised regarding the impact of cultural regeneration on local communities, and the implications for deliberately seeking to impose new meanings upon established landscapes and communities (Evans, 2005, Miles & Paddison, 2005). However, an area that has thus far been largely neglected is the impact that visual culture in the form of new architecture and

iconic architectural statements is making upon city residents and communities. Many of the new architectural projects are designed to sell the city to an international audience (Jencks, 2006), however it remains to be seen if they bare any relevance or meaning to local people. It is thus important to understand if the public accept the new supposed 'icons' as symbols that represent local people or symbols of the elite cultural and economic domination of the city. Birmingham is a city dogged by its negatively stereotyped image of failed 1960's modernist architecture and since the 1980's has been intent on attempting to re-image itself as a global visitor destination through a host of environmental improvements, recently including the development and promotion of new iconic structures such as the Selfridges department store. In contrast to this image, a large proportion of its population grew up and knew the city and an industrial centre based upon manufacturing and a distinct Victorian civic centre, making it a perfect case study upon which to investigate the local impact of a new visual culture.

1.2 AIMS OF RESEARCH

This paper aims to **examine the manner in which local residents in Birmingham visually perceive major recent regeneration projects in the city. It investigates the extent to which people support and accept new architectural forms and buildings marketed as 'iconic', in comparison to the more established elements of the built environment, and it inquires as to which structures are viewed as most representative of the city by local people and for what reasons.** Research is conducted through the use of 30 in depth interviews with local people from the Birmingham areas from a variety of social, age and ethnic groups analysed through the use of statistical and anecdotal evidence.

1.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR CULTURAL REGENERATION STRATEGY

The nature of the research should aid in the highlighting of aspects of cultural regeneration policy, in terms of the development of visual architectural spectacle, that are most or least inclusive of local people and communities. Social inclusion is now a serious concern for

government, and it is therefore of immediate concern for planners to better understand the implications for established communities of the new regeneration projects that are imposed, not just in the immediate locality of the development but as regards the conscious identity of all of the cities residents. Local people are more accepting of some types of development than others, and it is important to understand the reason for this in order that the successes of these developments can be repeated elsewhere. There are, of course, much wider causes for the popular cultural endorsement of new cultural flagships, however visual representation is one of the most obvious and striking symbols of cultural imposition on an existing way of life, therefore it is important to understand people's reactions. Perceived negative reactions to cultural flagships may also advocate those advocating alternative approaches to sensitive areas, including a move toward incremental changes rather than blanket redevelopment (Parkinson, 2007), allowing chance for architectural form to be incorporated into the surrounding environment and new meanings to develop.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter sets out the current debate regarding the merits and potential impacts of cultural regeneration in economic and social terms, and poses a series of resultant questions that will be taken into account during the course of research.

The current debate regarding the benefits of flagship cultural regeneration

2.1 ESTABLISHED CRITICISMS OF FLAGSHIP CULTURAL REGENERATION

Criticisms regarding the supposedly shared economic and social benefits to city residents of cultural regeneration and flagship projects have been well documented. It is claimed that the direct benefits of such schemes in terms of job creation are often exaggerated (Loftman & Nevin, 1996), and that there is an over reliance on the positive effects of the trickle down process (Bassett, 1996). Many of the jobs that are created are allocated to people outside of the inner city bounding city centre flagships and do not benefit the city's poorest residents (Doucet, 2007). Such schemes have also been accused of merely furthering social polarisation and exclusion (Doucet, 2007, Eisinger, 2000), and reclaiming spaces around the centre of the city for elites (MacLeod, 2002); new cultural amenities bring with them high levels of gentrification which can uproot existing communities and increase levels of segregation between rich and poor areas, fragmenting the city (Parker & Long, 2004, MacLeod, 2002, Loftman & Nevin, 1995, Marcuse, 1989). As in Birmingham, there are many instances of resources being moved away from welfare provision to fund new entrepreneurial growth schemes, and as many schemes continue to be loss making shortfalls are further exaggerated (Loftman & Nevin, 1996).

The utilisation of public sector funds to aid private sector development partnerships have also been questioned (Atkinson, 2004), as interests may increasingly become truncated toward private sector elites and property redevelopers (Bassett, 1996). Increasingly, the attention of the local authority, along with the public and media has become diverted from areas of severe deprivation in the inner city, and focused increasingly on the development of a prestigious city centre (Edwards, 1997, Loftman & Nevin, 1996), where exciting new projects mask deeper social and economic divisions

within the city (Hubbard, 1995). Though focusing on small highly profitable city centre regeneration sites is necessary in order to attract developers, it concentrates wealth and resources isolating other areas of the city (Doucet, 2007, MacLeod, 2002). Many projects have also been criticised for catering for exclusively middle class tastes as they are the high spending consumers that the city wishes to attract (Atkinson, 2004, Eisinger, 2000, Loftman & Nevin, 1995). This leaves other city residents feeling disenfranchised and excluded from the urban renaissance as they cannot utilise the new amenities (Evans, 2005).

2.2 THE IMPACT UPON LOCAL CULTURE

Aside from these criticisms, more recently increasing attention has been given to understanding what impact cultural flagship developments have upon existing local culture, and what meanings they hold for local people (Evans, 2005). It is here that many aspects of cultural regeneration, not only the creation of flagship schemes can be accused of aiming at fulfilling the interests and needs of tourists and visitors rather than local residents (Doucet, 2007, MacLeod, 2002, Eisinger, 2000). Eisinger (2000), for instance draws stark comparison between the consumption based prestigious tourist attractions of our city centre, and inclusive nature of the public parks and major civic facilities built during the late 19th century, aimed providing for residents of the expanding city. It is said that people make interpretations about themselves and society by where they live (De Bres & Davis, 2001) as places take on significant social meanings (Ho, 2006, Norberg-Schulz, 1985); if residents do not feel they are able to associate with the influx of new developments resentment, disillusion and further segregation of society may occur. Due to the propensity to cater for tourists or the suburban middle classes, it is alleged that many flagship projects bare little relevance to their urban setting in terms of local culture and identity (Doucet, 2007). They may be introverted and self contained, highlighting divisions between different social status groups (Porter & Barber, 2007).

Urban design elements are now heavily reflected upon in planning new flagship developments and are used as a tool to create conditions where a lively atmosphere and sense of place can become established (Wansborough & Mageean, 2000); however it is assumed too readily that this alone can create culture, and human elements are ignored (Porter & Barber, 2007). It is also often assumed that existing local cultures in run-down

inner city areas ripe for redevelopment are of not value unless able to be utilised in the process of re-imaging and re-packaging areas of the city (Evans, 2005). Often this is due to a lack of understanding or decent connections between the local authority and local cultural groups (Evans, 2005). Projects that do take their surroundings into account may represent sanitised versions of local culture to commodify places for middle class and tourist consumption (Porter & Barber, 2007). These projects can end up becoming bland and seeming contrived, subject to brand decay without the input of organic local culture (McCarthy, 2006,) and require much more extensive funding and effort to create a sense of identity from scratch (Evans, 2003). The large number of similar developments across many cities seeking to regenerate also contributes to rapid brand decay, and the appearance of what seem like 'clone cities' (Doucet, 2007, Evans, 2003). At the other extreme, new developments may also aid in the creation of 'place myths' and romanticised or stereotyped visions of heritage that selectively excludes certain meanings and memories of a place (McCarthy, 2006, Parker & Long, 2004) . This may be manufactured in order to create an image of 'urban idyll', vital in order to attract new middle class residents (Colomb, 2007). Successful regeneration of the historic environment can help to create a strong community identity (Evans, 2005), however the selective preservation of the stereotyped historic built environment may also result in the destruction of an era of buildings associated with a whole generation of people, memories and meanings. It has also been noted that festivals and cultural events have a significant effect in portraying a narrowly defined image of a locality, which can be manipulated to appeal to tourists (De Bres & Davis, 2001) . Local art initiatives linked to new projects may also represent manipulated images of place that suit local elites and not true local identities (McCarthy, 2006, Porter & Barber, 2007).

Harvey (1989) has suggested that new cultural and entertainment projects, by creating a sanitised version of culture not only attract a new consumer class but also act to coerce the public into an acceptance of elite entrepreneurial capitalist policies. This is because the new amenities have the effect of raising civic pride through spectacle, creating the illusion of prosperity and wealth in the city, whilst diverting attention from real social problems (Evans, 2005, Hubbard, 1996b, Harvey, 1989). In this way the dominance of elite entrepreneurial policy serves to reinforce existing social structures and to propagate consumerism as the dominant ideology and meaning in the built environment, manipulating local interpretations of the built environment and cultures attached to place (Hubbard, 1996). Pluralists may suggest that communities and local interest groups do

have an influence in development, however in reality despite the acceptance by government of the need for social inclusion this is extremely limited (Evans, 2005), especially in poorer less empowered communities.

2.3 CIVIC PRIDE: POSITIVE IMPLICATIONS FOR LOCAL CULTURAL IDENTITY

The converse approach however has been to view the possibility of the civic pride generated by cultural regeneration as a positive factor; Evans (2005) suggests that most research has been too pessimistic, and highlights the fact cultural regeneration can act to give communities hope and positive energy, and residents may relate more positively to new development than is often assumed. If approached in a sensitive manner, it is alleged that cultural regeneration can engender a greater sense of identification with the city through shared identity rather than acceptance of imposed meanings only relevant to elites (McCarthy, 2006, Miles & Paddison, 2005, Evans, 2005, Loftman & Nevin, 1995).

Significant evidence for this rests with a recent study conducted of the regeneration of the quayside area of Newcastle-Gateshead (Miles, 2005, Bailey, Miles & Stark, 2004) which revealed that new projects such as the Baltic Arts centre and the Sage Concert Hall, despite appearing to cater for exclusive middle class tastes had actually encouraged a much greater participation of local people in the arts and were seen as a focus of immense civic pride for people of a range of social backgrounds and age groups (Bailey, Miles & Stark, 2004). Part of the reasons for the adoption of these new cultural projects into the wider public acceptance it is suggested is because of the associations between the former vibrancy of the historic quayside as a popular meeting point, and the rejuvenation of the area as a new public focal point in a similar vein (Miles, 2005). Waterfronts have historically been meeting places and centres of vibrant cultural exchange (Kostof, 1992), and thus have retaining significant meanings and symbolic values for local people.

In this manner therefore far from alienating or removing existing local cultures it is possible that sympathetic development when combined positively with historic associations and popular memories can enhance distinctiveness and local identity. In Newcastle-Gateshead this was supported by the fact that developments were designed with community participation in mind from the very beginning (Bailey, Miles & Stark, 2004). The long term success of cultural regeneration projects may depend upon the ability of such schemes to engage with people's sense of belonging and identity rather than to

attempt to supersede or overly manipulate it. Bland new developments may have initial success if heavily marketed, but are more susceptible to brand fatigue and require constant re-invention. The endorsement of local 'organic' culture is more dynamic, and can allow for greater long term success as well as greater sustainability and a lesser degree of social exclusion (Miles, 2005). The contrast between the vibrancy of the Gateshead projects and the relatively bland and sanitised amenities of the Newcastle side of the river has been highlighted as a case in point (Miles, 2005).

The recent trend toward the idea of 'social inclusion' in planning and regeneration has acknowledged the fact that new development needs to embrace rather than alienate existing 'organic' local culture, accepting that a rapid influx of flagship schemes can be disruptive if new exclusive cultural amenities are forced upon people (Porter & Barber, 2007, Evans, 2005, Miles & Paddison, 2005). Examples such as Manchester's Northern Quarter have been cited as areas where arts funding and the promotion of small scale sensitive redevelopment that integrates with the existing historic fabric has achieved more genuine and varied organic cultural development which generates a stronger sense of local identity and a more sustainable community in the long term (Porter & Barber, 2007). This can be contrasted with the Sheffield 'Creative Industries Quarter', or Birmingham's 'Eastside' regeneration area which lack distinction due to the failure to engage in the same manner with local culture, and the approach of comprehensive redevelopment (Porter & Barber, 2007, 2006). It must also be acknowledged that many smaller projects especially in the arts as found in the Northern Quarter do cater more for the local community and not everything is related to external image marketing (Evans, 2005).

There are therefore many concerns in terms of the impact that cultural regeneration is having upon existing communities in the city in economic terms and in terms of social and cultural exclusion. Of particular relevance to this research project is Harvey's notion that re-packaged culture and entertainment venues may coerce people into accepting entrepreneurial policies, something which strongly applies to the visual aspect of flagships which act as striking new symbols (Harvey, 1989). However, the later section also emphasises crucially that this apparent coercion may have positive consequences for local culture (Wansborough & Mageean, 2000); if developed with reference to established places of local meaning and significance in a manner which emphasises and builds on existing local identity, new cultural flagships can be accepted by local people and act as new symbols of pride and identity. This concept will be explored with reference to local

people in Birmingham.

The relevance of the Visual Culture of Architecture to the Debate

2.4 ICONIC ARCHITECTURE: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE VISUAL ASPECT TO THE CULTURAL REGENERATION DEBATE

Due to the vital importance that has been given to re-imaging our post industrial cities, arguably the most significant manifestation of cultural regeneration is visual and is displayed through new architecture. A city expresses itself through its architecture, and a new exciting crop of buildings is now thought to be able to provide a culture of its own where previously it was lacking (Shillam, 2004). There is evidence that the functional aspects of cultural flagships have contributed positively to image change, for example the National Indoor Arena has caused people to perceive Birmingham as a significant sporting destination to some extent (Smith, 2006). Nevertheless, it is visual re-imaging that has become a key marketing tool, cities have increasingly been looking to bold and iconic architectural projects to announce their new-found cultural renaissance (Smith, 2006). It is no longer adequate merely to possess a world class sporting arena, opera house or conference centre for its function, but it must be 'iconic' and be in possession of world class aesthetic attributes built by an internationally recognised architect acting as a top brand label (Jencks, 2006, Kaika & Thielen, 2006). As Evans (2003) has suggested, it seems to matter less what the function of the new flagship project is, as long as it makes a significant architectural statement to visitors and advertises the city to the world; this is illustrated by the fact that many buildings are not necessarily the best designs for their purpose as for instance art galleries such as the Tate Modern or Baltic arts centre can overwhelm their collections (Evans, 2003). Creating memorable and distinctive 'postcard' images and associations for the visitor is seen as the key (Ho, 2006, Kaika & Thielen, 2006, Sklair, 2006).

Not only has a city's image become a vital promotional tool, but it is increasingly linked to success or failure; places such as Birmingham have become as intent upon removing negative associations with modernist architecture as creating new ones (Parker & Long, 2004). Whilst a concentration on the visual culture of architecture may attract national or even global attention, it is unclear how it is impacting upon the sentiments of a

city's own residents (Doucet, 2007). As objects in built form take on important social meanings and link to memories and understanding of place (Ho, 2006, Norberg-Schulz, 1985), it is vital to gauge the reaction toward the implementation of new landmark architecture, and to understand if it holds the same iconic meanings for local people as its images are intended for the city on the national and global stage.

There have been some limited studies regarding the attitudes of local people toward the urban renaissance in their cities (Hubbard, 1996, Loftman & Nevin, 1995), and in particular to attitudes regarding the influx of new post-modern architectural projects since the 1980's (Hubbard, 1996). However there remains little evidence of public reaction toward the trend toward iconic architecture, and whether these projects are viewed as an integral part of what local people regard as their city, or whether they are perceived as exclusive, alien and aimed at outsiders rather than local interests. These architectural projects may also be viewed differently by different social groups within the city, and may mean different things to different people.

It is important to consider what the term 'iconic' means and what the public conception of this is. Icons are promoted by developers and city authorities based upon their visual rather than functional merits having achieved this iconic status before they are even constructed. However images and the realities of a building in everyday use differ, and iconic status is attained through public consensus and notoriety in time as buildings gain meaning (Sklair, 2006), not from the pre-conceived promotion of image alone. Iconic status in the eye of the local public, as with many famous landmarks such as the Eiffel Tower, is often archived long afterwards (Sklair, 2006). Buildings are now heavily branded upon image and can be described as manufactured 'celebrity' fashion icons (Jencks, 2006, Sklair, 2006), however little consideration is often given to what these building symbolise to different people (Sklair, 2006). Development rhetoric for instance often talks of creating 'character' and sense of place through design and visual identity, however this ignores the dynamic of community perception and personal experience (Jiven & Larkham, 2003).

The lack of appreciation of interpretations and meanings related to the built form is a direct concern relating to the commissioning of iconic structures (Jiven & Larkham, 2003). Of the major focuses has been whether social or individual interpretations are more significant (Smith, 2006, Jiven & Larkham, 2003, Hubbard, 1996a, Hubbard 1996b). Collective social group identity is vitally important as it links with place location and

inevitably its history and memories (Jiven & Larkham, 2003). It has been suggested that meanings are formulated via social constructions referred to as 'social representation', and then individually interpreted (Hubbard, 1996a). However the degree of influence of that the imposed constructs from elite cultural and architectural developments is questioned; some including Harvey (1989) see it as the dominant force where as others believe meanings to be strongly contested and interpreted very differently by different social groups (Wansborough & Mageean, 2000).

2.5 THE APPEAL OF FORM OVER FUNCTION

The trend toward Iconic architecture is also one of the strongest justification's of Harvey's comments regarding the fact that in the post-industrial city fashion, style and form is more important than substance and function. Exciting visual images promote the city as a place for consumers to indulge in select spaces which can often be fragmented and located on specific exclusive city centre locations (Harvey, 1989). Utilisation of spectacular architectural projects also supports the idea that the city of spectacle can manipulate public and even professional opinion into the willing acceptance of elite entrepreneurial philosophies (Hubbard, 1995). If the quality and wow factor of new buildings is significant enough, people may be less inclined to focus upon the functional aspects of the building or its negative social or environmental implications. The promotion of developments primarily by image as the major focus, without referring to people, context or everyday use into account is common (Evans, 2005).

The dominance of form and branding over function is illustrated by a recent study of the development of tall buildings in the City of London by Charney (2007). Tall buildings are spectacular and hugely symbolic buildings that can have a high degree of visual exposure and thus are extremely popular in terms of city re-imaging and branding , as a re attempts to create a globally identifiable city skyline (Evans, 2003); however their impacts upon the built environment can also be huge. It is alleged that in the City developers and the Mayor used high quality iconic architecture by high profile 'brand name' architects such as Norman Foster as a means to justify the construction of buildings that were strongly opposed by Conservation Groups, English Heritage (Charney, 2007) An English Heritage survey in 2001 also illustrated that 67% of members of the public interviewed voiced major concern regarding the construction of new tall buildings (English Heritage, 2001). However, the production of high quality seductive images of spectacular architecture

served to sway public opinion and legitimate their construction and made it difficult for the concerns of the opposition to seem credible (Charney, 2007).

The study of the development of tall buildings in the city also highlighted the importance of the acceptance of the economic rhetoric of entrepreneurial policies. It was made clear on many occasions by Ken Livingstone amongst others that tall buildings were symbols of a global city and London must possess them to be able to compete; people were much more accepting of the new structures if they believed that they were essential to their own prosperity (Charney, 2007). Those concerned about other social or heritage implications are frequently made to appear out of touch and in the way of progress. The rhetoric that looks to justify iconic images by referring to global economic competition and the need to brand the city to compete is also popular with local politicians who can use it to justify spending that is based around elite business interests (Eisinger, 2000).

Monumental projects such as skyscrapers may also be used to bolster their own image as well as that of the city (Eisinger, 2000, Loftman & Nevin, 1995). The manner in which the media is utilised to transmit such messages is vital (Smith, 2006, Hubbard 1996); for instance it is particularly notable that new projects may be sold to the public on the basis of being 'iconic' from images and rhetoric alone, and that something can be preconceived as such rather than having to attain this status from gradual public and professional recognition (Sklair, 2006).

2.6 EXCLUSIVE PRIVATE ICON VS INCLUSIVE PUBLIC REALM

Iconic images may therefore make more legitimate the construction of structures with arguably limited public benefit and distract attention from functional issues without as much questioning as may be appropriate. It also appears to be the case that many of these iconic structures appear visually more exclusive and private (Kaika & Thielen, 2006), and do not address or adhere to the public realm or existing fabric of the city. Their very distinctiveness and abstract shapes highlight their exclusivity. As the skyscrapers of the 1920's US announced the dominance of big business over and religious civic institutions (Kostof, 1992), the majority of iconic high rises and new striking symbols of British and European cities are not very inclusive structures. Many Initial city re-imaging schemes involved the rejuvenation of the public realm, and many cultural flagships whilst arguably exclusive in function addressed the public realm and emphasised the vibrancy of public space. However, it could be argued that the shift in emphasis toward a visual culture has

put less emphasis upon relation to public spaces and the relationship to the existing city fabric. It is important to understand if people will relate to this stuff in the same way now, whether this new visual culture can be seen to exemplify to people a more fragmented and exclusive consumer ethos to the city that they do not all feel connected to.

Hubbards's (1996) survey illustrated that people related well to historic references and post modern vernacular detail as it reflected and referred to the existing fabric of their city. It has been argued that post-modern designs including vernacular architectural references may help to legitimate new developments by historic associations with the host city allowing the to bridge that gaps and limit the shock of the new (Kaika & Thielen, 2006, Hubbard, 1996, Harvey, 1989). The public may also therefore reflect well to the harmonious juxtaposition of old and new structures and accept the new if it relates well and endorses the existing city fabric. Evans (2005) has highlighted the fact that despite new iconic projects the public may still relate more positively to the re-use of traditional and historic structures, as well as buildings that relate to public realm rather than high architecture. The development of iconic new structures is an obvious departure from this idea and illustrates the need to assess public reaction to the new structures.

This section of the literature review has therefore highlighted the assessment criteria unique to the visual dynamic of cultural regeneration. The Birmingham case study can be used to assess to some extent whether people are seduced by iconic imagery at the expense of questioning function, and whether high class design can be utilised to manipulate opinions regarding architecture. Public realisation of the intended target audience of iconic architecture can also be assessed in terms of how they feel that it represents local people, in comparison to more established civic and historic buildings.

The Birmingham Case Study

2.7 BACKGROUND TO THE CASE STUDY

The city of Birmingham emerged from industrial roots in the 19th century, specialising in metal working and the manufacturing of goods such as jewellery and guns. Its reputation for manufacturing earned it the title of the 'workshop of the world' at its peak in the late century (Briggs, 1963). During the 20th century the economy was able to diversify into

engineering and automotive manufacture and sustained relative economic prosperity whilst many of the traditional industries in Britain's northern cities were already in decline. The fact that the city's industries had previously remained relatively immune to structural problems in the economy however made the severe decline in manufacturing during the 1970's and early 1980's all the more traumatic; Birmingham lost 191,000 jobs between 1971 and 1987 which represented 30% of its employment base and up to half of all manufacturing employment, making it one of the worst hit regions in the UK (Porter & Barber, 2007).

The economic crisis led to the adoption of a pro-growth orientated agenda from the early 1980's which looked to engage the private sector in regeneration partnerships. The city has had a history of corporate pragmatism during the post-war period, businesses being much more involved in city governance than other provincial UK cities (DiGaetano & Lawless, 1999, Bassett, 1996). This can be traced back as far as the 1870's and the preaching of the 'civic gospel' by Joseph Chamberlain, attracting local business elites to dominate the City Council (Briggs, 1963). Engaging in local partnerships several major new collaborative projects were created in the city, including a new science park involving Lloyds Bank and Aston University, and prestige city centre flagship redevelopment projects such as the International Convention Centre, designed specifically to attract new business investment. The creation of the National Indoor Arena and the Broad Street Entertainment District were subsequently developed in an attempt to attract tourist based investments (Porter & Barber, 2007), and turned out to be the first of many.

2.8 CRITICISMS OF BIRMINGHAM'S FLAGSHIP CULTURAL REGENERATION POLICY

Birmingham's flagship cultural regeneration policies retained three assumptions: that the city as a whole would benefit from investment, residents would benefit from new amenities and jobs, and public sector costs would be minimised (Loftman & Nevin, 2003). However there have been criticisms of the council's approach; much of the funding for projects such as the NIA, ICC and Hyatt Hotel came from the local authority which was forced to cut welfare spending such as education as a result (Loftman & Nevin, 1996). The employment benefits of the city's flagships have also been questioned, as it is argued that they have provided little benefit for inner city residents (Loftman & Nevin, 1995). In the cities cultural 'Jewellery' Quarter it is argued that heritage and existing culture has been sanitised for

exclusive middle class consumption in order to generate investment, despite the opposition of local manufacturers and residents hit by increased property prices and difficult neighbours (Pollard, 2004). In the new Eastside cultural quarter development has taken place at the expense of existing cultural amenities including well known public houses and a popular local music venue which have been removed as not in keeping with the desired urban cultural image (Porter & Barber, 2006). Art schemes attributed to developments such as Brindley Place prioritise development promotion rather than local cultural endorsement (McCarthy, 2006). A significant criticism is that new development is bland and generic and does not seek to integrate or seek inspiration from existing local culture (Porter & Barber, 2007). Instead areas such as Eastside are subject to wholesale blanket redevelopment schemes not gradual incremental change (Jiven & Larkham, 2003). In the 2007 City Centre Masterplan Professor Michael Parkinson (2007) summed up this problem in stating that

Despite all the progress of recent years, the city centre seems to respond to major national developers rather than local developers or end users. Many argue that the city centre is overdeveloped, that it does not have enough areas with grit, diversity, and authenticity... The city centre needs to have much more diversity....

2.9 THE RE-IMAGING OF THE CITY: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF VISUAL CULTURE AND ICONIC ARCHITECTURE

Birmingham was unique in realising need to create attractive urban spaces very early on in its regeneration strategies (Hubbard, 1995). This was illustrated by the creation of a series of landscaped linked public streets and squares across the city centre. The reason for this concern regarding improving the quality of the urban environment was the realisation that negative stereotyping of Birmingham's image as a city, and the poor quality of its architecture, amenities and public realm were acting as a barrier to investment (Webster, 2001). Ever since it adopted bold post-war redevelopment strategies the 1960's, Birmingham has become synonymous with the modernist experiment. Originally viewed as a symbol of the future, from the late 1970's the city began to be associated with the negative attributes of modernist planning, including brutalist concrete and car dominated environments.



Fig. 1 The old Bull Ring Centre, 1960's

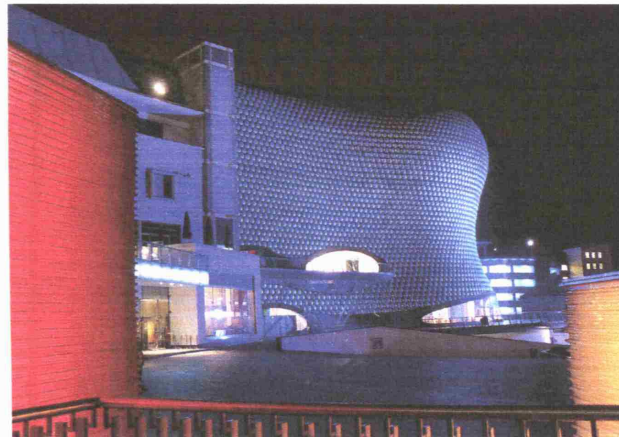


Fig. 2 The new Bullring Centre, 2003

The re-imaging of the city therefore has been a particularly high priority for city council regeneration strategies. The 1988 'Highbury Initiative' planning symposium had revealed that the city lacked a clear image (Kennedy, 2004); even as recently as 2004 the Birmingham's Capital of Culture bid was critical of the cities image: despite being recognised for the development of its cultural attractions it was stated that there was a lack of clear visual identity and world class architecture (Kennedy, 2004, Lutz, 2004). Criticism of this nature has led the city council in the last 5-10 years to priorities the development of iconic architecture. In terms of design previous developments such as the ICC and Brindley Place fulfilled the role of raising the architectural standard to some degree, and incorporated post modern styles which served to distance them from the cities reviled modernist image. However the major developments of the 1990's were conceptually based around public spaces and their place in the framework of streets and squares in the city centre. The refurbished canal network, the new Centenary Square and Broad Street area enmesh these new west end flagships whose focus and positive image is the vibrancy of the new public areas. Since then there has been a more concerted focus upon the design of individual buildings and iconic images, resulting in the construction of eye-catching buildings such as the Selfridges department store, and the development of the under construction 'Cube' and Arena Central tower designed by renown architects Ken Shuttleworth and Eric Kuhn. The conception of the Arena Central Tower from the late 1990's in particular marked the beginning a focus upon the skyline as a way to create a memorable visual image of the city. Arena Central Tower (now the V building, figure 1) in particular was held up by the press as representing Birmingham's own world city icon, akin to the Eiffel Tower (Webster, 2001). The construction of tall buildings

such as the Beetham tower (Ian Simpson) (figure 2) and Snow Hill Tower (Glen Howells) (figure 3) are testimony to a deliberate policy of encouraging developers to build tall, highlighted by published guidelines such as the city's 'High Places' policy (Short, 2007). The recent support for proposals for the development of a controversial 35 story landmark glass office tower in the heart of one of the city centre's most sensitive conservation areas on Colmore Row, opposed by conservation groups and CABA also illustrates the lengths that the council wish to go to to establish these landmarks in the city centre. A representation of the city skyline now even adorns the city councils website (www.birmingham.gov.uk) and much of their promotional material.



Fig. 3 V Building (proposal)



Fig. 4 Beetham Tower



Fig. 5 Snow Hill Towers (under construction)

2.10 THE IMPLICATIONS FOR LOCAL CULTURE OF BIRMINGHAM'S VISUAL RE-IMAGING STRATEGY

Criticisms of the exclusionary nature of the council's cultural regeneration policies can be extended to the council's drive at re-imagining the city through design and iconic architecture. Kennedy (2004) suggests that understanding of the perceptions of visual culture represents a gap between social and cultural regeneration, and has been something that has been neglected by planning policy. A criticism of Birmingham's iconic flagship projects such as the Selfridges department store is that they do not relate to their surroundings or cultural context, not merely for immediate neighbours but on a city wide basis. In a study conducted from the early 1990's Hubbard concluded from a survey of public attitudes toward new buildings in the city that people felt more comfortable with post

modern references to the vernacular traditions of the area, and appreciated buildings thank made visual references to the past through architectural detailing (Hubbard, 1996). However, with the construction of much more high profile icons that are readily marketed as prime images of the city it remains to be seen if public attitudes within the city will be supportive.

The increasing private and exclusive ethos of buildings may also increase concerns regarding new icons not fitting in with existing public urban fabric. It has been suggested by Glen Howells (2004), one of the city's leading architects that whilst high quality design is vital for cities cultural health, should submit to public squares and spaces coherently. However, There have been concerns that more recent flagship projects such as the Bull Ring and Selfridges do not reflect the public realm and historic public uses such as the old Rag Markets which have now been ostracised from what now a privately controlled area that takes precedence, despite a concerted attempt to create prominent public thoroughfare (Holyoak, 2004).

Birmingham is also a young city, and the attitudes of younger people may be more accepting of change and styles that mark a departure from what is viewed by the older generation as traditional architecture in the city. It is also an ethnically diverse city with significant levels of immigration during the postwar period, and it has been argued that diversity is one of the primary identifying features of the city (Balshaw, 2004). A range of new and exciting architectural styles rather than neglecting the city's past has also been suggested as symbolic of the cities diversity and diversity of culture (Shillam, 2004), illustrating a positive change. It may be that people of different people of different age and social groups are more accepting of this change than others. It has been alleged that in the cities selective preservation of its Victorian heritage and removal of 1960's modernist architecture that the history and memory of the city has been romanticised (Balshaw, 2004) and the memories of other social and age groups disrupted by blanket regeneration policies that erase whole sections of the townscape (Short, 2007, Parker & Long, 2003). The city's selective conservation strategies for instance have preserved and promoted the Jewellery Quarter, yet demolished the vast majority of Eastside, an equally historic yet less aesthetically pleasing area. An obsession with creating a romanticised image of the past combined with architectural visions of the future not only create place myths but neglect current generations and the city's most recent past (Balshaw, 2004, Parker & Long, 2003), yet this concern is often blunted by rhetoric (Kennedy, 2004) . A sensitive blend of old and new is called for (Balshaw, 2004), as recognised at least in spirit by the cities current motto

'Global City with a Local Heart', however it remains to be seen if this is recognised by local people.

2.11 CRITICAL QUESTIONS

This study is therefore an attempt to ascertain whether the local public accept and associate with iconic structures in the city (Jencks, 2006), as symbols of cultural expression and of economic recovery and prosperity (Hubbard, 1996b), or whether their spectacle portrays an exclusivity that lacks meaning and relevance to the local context (Porter & Barber, 2007). From the literature review it is also possible to surmise a series of critical sub-questions to focus upon. These include:

- 1. Do people like and relate to new cultural flagship developments and iconic architecture visually, or more toward traditional structures?**
- 2. Are icons seen to represent local people or are they perceived as just for tourists and threatening of local culture?**
- 3. Do these projects act as a distraction from other concerns, or act as a generator of civic pride and means of acceptance of elite entrepreneurial policies?**
- 4. Do people associate more with form or function? Does iconic status justify construction without questioning, and do people judge on image alone?**
- 5. Do people perceive icons seem exclusive and withdrawn from the urban fabric in comparison to publicly focused urban design projects that endorse existing townscape?**

These issues now will be addressed as the core of the sub focus in the Birmingham survey.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 EVOLUTION OF METHODOLOGY

Initial aims for the study were gauging attitudes toward the visual appearance of new flagship regeneration in the city, through the responses that would be obtained to visual prompting in the form of images of new architecture. However, it was discovered that a very similar survey has been previously carried out by Hubbard (1996) in the 1990's in which people were interviewed in order to allow the recording of their opinions regarding the visual appearance of new development, and the extent to which it was accepted by local people. The existence of similar social constructs between people of similar social groups was also considered. Rather than seeking to replicate this study ten years on, the theme of research therefore took a radical departure from this route in order to develop and build upon the methodology employed by Hubbard, and introducing new dynamics.

The passage of time since this initial study is significant: since the early 1990's the pace of regeneration in the city as with other places in the UK has gathered, and it has been constantly reiterated by the New Labour government that we must live with the inevitable consequences of a globalised economy where competition for investment is vital, and requires the rebirth of our cities to challenge for it. Due to the regeneration and urban renaissance rhetoric that we have become accustomed to, it stands to reason that entrepreneurial policies may have become more widely accepted by the public, more consciously aware of global pressures and the drive to promote our cities. However, as I have expressed in the literature review, there has also been a marked shift toward the emphasis of a new visual culture of regeneration through iconic symbolism (Jencks, 2006), a marked departure from the more modest post modern vernacular references and landscaped public areas completed in the early 1990's, which embraced rather than stamped authority upon identities in the city. A assessment of attitudes regarding these new elements in the built environment in contrast to earlier flagships is a new key focus.

There are important new elements of contrast that have been introduced into this study emphasising its unique focus: New iconic structures are deliberately contrasted with vernacular post modern styles, but also with older buildings representative of the cities past, and established symbolic buildings of the past which may be still seen as

representative 'icons' by people. Emphasis has been placed not just on how people view the new architecture of the urban renaissance but how they contrast it and relate it to existing structures and urban fabric. There are also a mixture of buildings that mesh into the existing urban realm, and those which stand out and dominate their surroundings, in order to understand how people view the intrusion of bold architectural statements into the townscape. The study also includes a distinct variety of uses within the images of the built environment that were presented to interviewees, in attempt to gauge if the function of a building is still highlighted as a concern above visual impact alone. The images employed included a mixture of distinct public places and private environments, in attempt to see if these would act as a focus for discussion and would be singled out above aesthetic concerns alone, and if factors such as this would be deemed more important to people than iconic imagery alone, or if possibly they viewed them as separate issues serving different purposes.

3.2 EMPLOYED METHODOLOGY

The study that was conducted was designed to examine the attitudes of local Birmingham residents from a range of backgrounds in terms of their attitudes to the built form of Birmingham city centre. The survey consisted of 30 detailed interviews lasting for up to an hour each in duration. Interviewees were selected at random from a diverse range of age groups, genders and social backgrounds located in and immediately surrounding the Birmingham administrative area (see figure 6). All of those people interviewed had lived in the city for a period of five years or more. Interviewees were selected from a diverse range of locations in and around the city ranging from the city centre to the inner city and suburban areas (see figure 7).

No	Age	Location	Occupation	Ethnic	Income
1	Under 20	Sutton Coldfield	Student	White	low
2	40-60	West Bromwich	Housewife	White	middle
3	40-60	West Bromwich	Company Director	White	high
4	20-40	Handsworth Wood	Planner	White	middle
5	20-40	Selly Oak	Lawyer	Arab Iraqi	middle
6	40-60	Smethwick	Factory Worker	White	low
7	40-60	Solihull	Engineer & Designer	White	high
8	40-60	Sutton Coldfield	Businessman	White	high
9	Under 20	Sutton Coldfield	Student	White	low
10	40-60	Great Barr	Company Rep	White	middle
11	60-80	Kings Norton	Company Director	White	high
12	Under 20	Great Barr	Student	White	low
13	40-60	Great Barr	Nurse	White	middle
14	60-80	Handsworth	Retired	White	low
15	20-40	Stirchley	Office Clerk	White	middle
16	20-40	Hodge Hill	Admin assistant	White	low
17	40-60	Hall Green	Secretary	White	middle
18	80 plus	Erdington	Retired	White	low
19	40-60	Perry Barr	Office Clerk	White	low
20	40-60	Hall Green	College Vice Principal	White	high
21	20-40	Sutton Coldfield	Student	White	low
22	40-60	Perry Barr	Gardner	White	low
23	20-40	Bournville	Office Clerk	White	low
24	80 plus	Sheldon	Retired	White	low
25	20-40	Lozells	Musician	Afro-Caribbean	low
26	20-40	Bournville	Secretary	White	low
27	20-40	Bordesley Green	Planner	Pakistani	middle
28	20-40	Selly Oak	Student	White	low
29	20-40	Digbeth	office worker	White	middle
30	20-40	Ladywood	office manager	Pakistani	middle

Fig. 6 List of attributes of the 30 people interviewed in the survey



Fig. 7 Locations of Interviewees in and immediately surrounding the city (Ward Map BCC, 2006)

The relevance of interviewing people from a range of different backgrounds was important, and followed Hubbard's (1996) survey in accepting the idea that there may be quantifiable differences between social groups due to differing social representations that have created knowledge codes. This means that individuals may share conceptions and understanding of the built environment with people of similar backgrounds, although interpretations will also vary based on the preferences of that individual. Though this is not a comprehensive enough survey to be able to conclusively analyse and contrast possible trends between social groups, nor is that the primary motivation, it is important to be aware of potential contrasts and the similarities between different sections of the population, and to attempt to gauge any apparent trends. Conversely the degree of divergence and opposition to new projects will ascertain the level to which people will be in acceptance of entrepreneurial policies.

During the interview, respondents were firstly asked if they could name five buildings of significance in the city of Birmingham. This question allowed for an analysis of which buildings resided most strongly in the public imagination and their age, type and function. The initial interview structure then followed a similar technique to that used initially by Hubbard (1996), where interviewees were asked to sort a range of images of 15 various developments in the city centre into categories of their choosing. This non-verbal technique allows respondents to select the aspects of each image that they wish to discuss, highlighting without prompting the themes that are of greatest relevance to them (Hubbard, 1996). However, as discussed in the evolution of this methodology, the survey conducted here differs from and seeks to build upon previous analysis by focusing not merely upon how people perceive recent developments but by aiming to gauge reactions when asked to compare between a range of 15 buildings which differ in terms of age, function and context (see figure 8). Interviewees were presented with a range of recent developments (figures 9-23) including those which have been portrayed in the media and by the council as iconic such as Selfridges, and the Beetham Tower. This also deliberately included images of developments such as the Cube and V building which had been heavily marketed as iconic, though are as yet not completed. These images were accompanied by a range of existing and older buildings (figures 18-23) including civic buildings such as the Town Hall and Central Library. The remaining inclusions were of

Best Representative	Function	Era	Style	Public/Private
Selfridges	Shopping	2000's	Iconic Futuristic	Private
Brindley Place	Office & Leisure	1990's	Post Modern Vernacular references	Private with public spaces and waterfront
Town Hall	Civic	Victorian	Classical	Publicly accessible building
Rotunda	Residential	1960's	Refurbished Modernist	Private
Curzon St Station	Empty	Victorian	Classical	Public owned, empty inaccessible
Jewellery Qt Terraces	Workshops	Victorian	C19th Vernacular	Private
ICC (waterfront)	Conference (Public Atrium)	1990's	Post Modern	private, publicly accessible thoroughfare and waterfront
Library	Civic	1970's	Brutalist	Public
Victoria sq	Public Square	1990's (refurbished)	Post Modern refurbishment of Victorian setting	Public
Cube	Residential & Leisure	2000's (not yet built)	Iconic Futuristic	Private
Beetham Tower	Hotel & Residential	2000's	Iconic Futuristic	Private
Hyatt	Hotel	1990's	Post Modern	Private
Mailbox	Shopping	2000's	Post Modern Refurbished 1960's modernist office	private, publicly accessible thoroughfare and waterfront
Millennium Point	Museum & Cinema	2000's	High Tech	Public
V Building	Residential & Leisure	2000's (not yet built)	Iconic Futuristic	Private

Fig. 8 List of developments and buildings with their attributes used in Interview

places and buildings in context, including images of Victoria Square, Brindley Place and sections of the regenerated canal network. The intention of allowing a range of buildings of different ages allowed for a comparison of people's opinions on new architecture and older symbols of the city, and to analyse opinions regarding the relationships and the deliberate juxtaposition between old and new townscapes. The range of modern developments included some with vernacular detailing as well as more minimalist glass towers and iconic

structures (figures 9-17). This allowed the contesting of the notion that people would relate better to modern buildings with historical reference and styles, as well as people's identification with icons. The deliberate inclusion of public places and images of buildings in context also allowed respondents to (crudely) highlight an identification with place and townscape as opposed to individual architectural images. The inclusion of the human elements of context (figures 16 & 17) also detracts from the desire merely to identify with the architectural elements of form, and allows for discussion of the wider function of buildings .

Once the sorts had been established Interviewees were also asked to rank the images in order of preference, and then to select which image they felt would best represent the city, and to explain their choices. This was in part intended to ascertain whether respondents would chose modern iconic and older structures to identify with Birmingham, and whether this was based upon personal connections or what they felt others would recognise. Interviewees were also asked to comment upon their opinions regarding tall buildings in the city, and whether they believed that they made positive additions. They were then were asked to comment upon whether they believed that the city had improved or not over the last 10-15 years based on their knowledge, and if they believed if it had improved relative to other cities in the UK. People were also referred to images of the two iconic buildings not yet built, and asked whether they would consider them iconic. This was to ascertain if people has assimilated the rhetoric of image promotion and the designation of iconic status before construction and popular appraisal.

To conclude, the question was posed as to whether people believed that new regeneration projects in the city centre such as the ones that were displayed to them in the images were a positive or negative influence on the city. This was taken as an opportunity for an extended discussion regarding how people viewed the impact of new projects, and to openly focus on areas that they wished to highlight. Generally this was a good indicator as to the degree that people viewed council backed entrepreneurial policies as being for or to the detriment of their benefit.

Birmingham Developments marketed as being Iconic

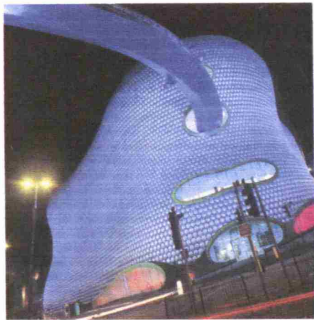


Fig. 9 Selfridges



Fig. 10 Beetham Twr

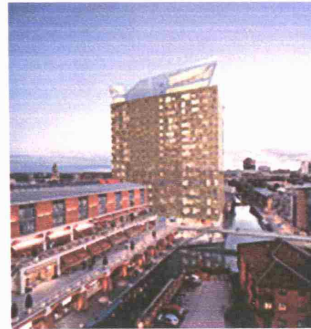


Fig. 11 The Cube



Fig. 12 V Building

Other Cultural Flagship Developments of the 1989-2000



Fig. 13 Millennium Point



Fig. 14 Hyatt Hotel



Fig. 15 The Mailbox



Fig. 16 Brindley Place



Fig. 17 The ICC (including Symphony Hall)

Prominent 1960's structures



Fig. 18 Central Library



Fig. 19 The Rotunda (refurbished 2006)

The Victorian Built Environment



Fig. 20 Town Hall



Fig. 21 Victoria Square



Fig. 22 The Jewellery Quarter



Fig. 23 Curzon St. Station (disused)

3.3 CRITIQUE OF METHODOLOGY

The use of the visual sorting technique and deliberately open line of verbal questioning during the interviews was specifically designed to allow interviewees to lead the discussion and focus upon areas that they felt important, however the range of images and questions in the interview procedure was deliberately selected in order to allow people to allow people to focus upon broader issues rather than just architectural form, such as the inclusion of buildings surrounded by public areas, and the inclusion of public spaces themselves. Though this is not misrepresenting the role of such architecture, as projects such as the ICC and Brindley Place were deliberately constructed with their place in the existing urban fabric as a major concern unlike some other architectural focal points in the city, it is difficult and great care must be taken not to lead people by the specific presentation of images in certain contexts.

It should be recognised that this survey is limited by its sample size, and by the lack of a balanced ethnic contingent, as the minority ethnic component is severely under represented, due to the difficulties encountered in achieving a balance between all variables for such a small sample size. This could be extended in further research.

It is also expected that results may be influenced to some degree by specific factors such as age, and the fact that older generations may relate more to older and more historic buildings. It is anticipated that they may be less accepting of more modern elements due to a natural affinity with buildings that represent or are reminiscent of romanticised visions of the past, rather than the fact alone that more modern developments fail to relate to people in general. Conversely it may also be the case that the younger generation is more accepting of more modern developments due to a lack of the meanings and nostalgic links to the past that are exhibited by the older generation, allowing for very different attitudes to develop outside of social and individual constructs.

4 ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

This section is split into two parts; the first section analyses interviewees responses and opinions regarding the built environment, where as the second section briefly emphasises any differences between the variables of social background, age, occupation and income of the respondents.

Part 1: Analysis of individual reactions to the built environment

4.1 BUILDINGS IN PUBLIC CONCIOUSNESS: FORM VS FUNCTION

Feature	Function	Era	Count	% of Respondents
Town Hall	Civic building	Victorian	20	67
Bull Ring	Shopping Centre	2000's	16	53
Cathedral	Civic Building	Georgian	11	37
Library	Civic Building	1970's	11	37
Selfridges	Shopping	2000's	11	37
Rotunda	Office Tower	1960's	10	33
Council House	Civic Building	Victorian	9	30
Mailbox	Shopping/Leisure	2000's	5	17
Alpha Tower	Office Tower	1960's	4	13
Brindley Place	Commercial Area	1990's	4	13
BT Tower	Communications	1960's	4	13
New St Station	Transport	1960's	4	13
N.I.A.	Sports Arena	1990's	3	10
Academy	Music Venue	1960's	2	7
Beetham Tower	Hotel/Residential	2000's	2	7
Custard Factory	Office/Retail	1990's	2	7
ICC	Conference/Music Hall	1980's	2	7
Millennium Point	Entertainment	2000's	2	7
Museum & Art Gallery	Entertainment	1900's	2	7
NIA	Entertainment	1990's	2	7
St Chad's	Religious	1830's	2	7

Fig. 24 The most frequently cited buildings by interviewees

Figure 24 relates to the most prevalent responses that were given when interviewees were asked to list up to five buildings of significance in the city as they came to mind. This was a simple test, but illustrates immediately the symbolic value of established historic civic buildings to local people. It is significant that it is these buildings that people relate to foremost when imagining the city, despite all the hype and rhetoric of urban renaissance and influx of modern developments, and the fact that most people will not use these buildings or encounter them on a daily basis. The other significant major acknowledgement is the Bull Ring and adjoining Selfridges department store, the later of which has been marketed as an iconic structure, and evidently also is prominent in the consciousness of local people.

Sort based on	Type of Sort	No of Sorts	% of Respondents
Old / Modern	Appearance	12	40
Iconic Buildings	Appearance	11	37
Attractive spaces	Appearance & function	9	30
Public/Private	Function	8	27
Chronology	Appearance	6	20
Use	Function	6	20
Heritage	Appearance & function	5	17
Re-Use of old	Appearance & function	5	17
Architectural Style	Appearance	3	10
Tall Buildings	Appearance	3	10
Bland buildings	Appearance	3	10
Civic Buildings	Function	2	7

Fig. 25 Most popular multiple sorts made by interviewees

Figure 25 illustrates the most popular sort categories made by respondents when presented with the images in the survey. This was designed to give an indication of the kind of issues that would be raised to people by visual imagery. Though not conclusive, it is clear that the majority of people identified with the images on the basis of appearance, and a significant number of people distinguished buildings as what they regarded as stand out, or iconic structures. It is also notable that the term iconic was freely used and largely based upon the visual appearance of buildings in the images. There is a clear distinction between the old and the new images of the city, again based upon visual appearance.

The fact that the criteria of visual appearance was the primary means of distinction between sorts should not be seen as decisive, as the survey method was visual and hence leads people to consider such aspects as architectural style foremost. However, it is very

significant that a large number people chose to distinguish buildings as being iconic, illustrating the consciousness of bold design and form as a manner in which to define a building. The definition of sorts based on the awareness of the public and private realm and of attractive space is of some significance as it illustrates an awareness and appreciation of the manner in which buildings fit into the urban environment or exclude it, which became of relevance later in the survey.

There importance of image was illustrated also when people were show two pictures of as yet un-built projects that have been heavily marketed as iconic, asked to judge whether they thought that they were so. A significant number of people recognised that the buildings could not be iconic because they were as yet un-built and therefore held not meaning based in image alone (Sklair, 2006). however, the majority of people were prepared to make judgements of the buildings and describe them as 'iconic' based upon their aesthetic images on the given renders alone. This indicates to some degree that people perhaps are now more inclined to become use to and accept at face value a culture of preconceived design solutions as the answer to cultural enhancement. It is notable that so few sought to query the function of the cube or V-building when asked if they could be seen as cultural icons.

4.2 POPULARITY OF NEW DEVELOPMENTS COMPARED TO EXISTING BUILDINGS

Most Preferred	Function	Era	Count	%	Justifications
Brindley Place	Office & Leisure	1990's	20	67	Nice public space / distinctive – not like over new places / evokes memories of old industrial city
Town Hall	Civic	Victorian	16	53	Beautiful / important for city history
Jewellery Qt Terraces	Workshops	Victorian	11	37	Evokes memories / nice feel / important history
Victoria sq	Public Square	1990's (refurbished)	9	30	Nice public space
Mailbox	Shopping	2000's	8	27	Good reuse / shows success / good use – nice to visit
Rotunda	Residential	1960's	7	23	Long-standing icon for many people / unique to city / interesting design / important to keep historic landmarks / defines city / important memories eg IRA bomb
Selfridges	Shopping	2000's	6	20	Ugly but bold / daring / iconic landmark / may just be fashion / spectacular / unusual
Library	Civic	1970's	4	13	Iconic and unique / interesting design /
Beetham Tower	Hotel & Residential	2000's	3	10	
V Building	Residential & Leisure	2000's (not yet built)	3	10	Exciting and new
Cube	Residential & Leisure	2000's (not yet built)	2	7	Exciting and bold / 'glossy' and striking / cant judge it if not built yet!
Curzon St Station	Empty	Victorian	2	7	Historic importance
ICC (waterfront)	Conference (Public Atrium)	1990's	2	7	Shows success
Hyatt	Hotel	1990's	1	3	
Millennium Point	Museum & Cinema	2000's	0	0	

Fig. 26 Most Preferred images

Most Preferred Generic categories	Count	%	Justifications
Older & Historic Buildings	14	47	Important history / beautiful to look at / wont age badly - timeless
Mix of old and new	12	40	Modern progress and history – more identity
Public canal areas	12	40	Vibrant and public / nice old and new / good reuse / evokes memories / striking improvement
Public squares	8	27	
Iconic new buildings	4	13	Striking and exciting / new Birmingham
Re- used buildings	4	13	
Vernacular details	4	13	Traditional / beautiful / timeless wont date
Iconic old landmarks	3	10	
Modern Buildings	3	10	In fashion / need to reflect the new Birmingham
Buildings that illustrate city success	2	7	Need to show success to world

Fig 27. Most preferred images by generic category

Figure 26 & 28 highlight the preferences and dislikes of respondents as regards images (multiple selections permitted by each person), and a selection of their justifications. Figures 27 & 29 also emphasise any generic categories that were highlighted as preferences or dislikes. It is here that we begin to see some significant results: a large proportion of respondents highlighted historic buildings such as the Town Hall and Jewellery Quarter as amongst their most preferred images, as is also the case with the generic categories, illustrating a firm attachment to the local historic environment which, as discussed can be associated with the creation of a strong local identity (Evans, 2005). An important thing to note however, is that despite the fact that several people commented upon the attractiveness of the historic Curzon Street Station, many also noted that they were unaware of where or what its function was (despite being a grade I listed structure!) and therefore its personal meaning was reduced. Therefore the more historic buildings seem to be preferred only if memories and meanings can be attached to them, and the buildings can be attributed to place. Despite being told that Curzon Street was in the city centre and is arguably the building with the greatest historical value in the city, very few people chose to associate with it.

The next thing to acknowledge is the extreme popularity of the Brindley Place development built during the 1990's which includes post modern vernacular references and crucially a series of public areas based around and intermeshed with the existing built environment, in particular the refurbished city centre historic canal network. This supports

the idea discussed earlier that post modern vernacular architectural references may help to legitimate new developments by historic associations with the host city limiting the shock of the new (Kaika & Thielen, 2006, Hubbard, 1996b, Harvey, 1989). However, it also appears that the overwhelming support for this area was due to the fact that it represented the progress of the city and an influx of new cultural activities and architectural styles but drew reference to existing historic elements of the built environment, such as the canals and accompanying refurbished historic buildings, as was speculated may have been the case (Balshaw, 2004). The juxtaposition of old and new elements here and elsewhere was cited extensively as a generic preference

“I like a mixture of old and new buildings seen together, we need to create a world city image to people but not lose the character of the city”

As Evans (2005) stated, it seems that people also relate well to re-used buildings with many positive comments as regards sympathetic re-use of historic structures. The focus on the manner in which Brindley Place relates well to its public surroundings also justifies the comment that the public appreciate buildings that relate to public realm rather than high architecture (Evans, 2005). The fact that the respondents related much more preferably to Brindley Place despite a similar waterfront setting in images of the ICC, and Cube emphasises that it is a combination of its interaction with existing historic environments and its embracing of public space (despite being a private development) which led to its popularity.

The association with images of the Victorian past was also universally appreciated by all but a couple of respondents of all ages, and any romanticised place myths that have been created have been wilfully accepted (McCarthy, 2006, Parker & Long, 2004) in the case of Brindley Place. However in response to questions over the future of the demolition threatened 1960's there was some support to protect the much maligned brutalist structure, despite not being necessarily viewed as aesthetically pleasing, some people viewed the library as an important past icon and questioned city council re-imaging rhetoric aimed at removing the structure which is not in keeping with the preferred image of the city. A universal dislike of the modernist stereotype has very much swayed the majority of the public in favour of demolition, however.

Structures that were public or embraced the fabric of the public urban realm were generally much more popular than those which appeared more exclusive, including

Brindley place and the Mailbox which is also integrated into the public realm and canal network. This also corresponds with local professional concerns that buildings must integrate well with the public realm Glen Howells (2004), and major concerns regarding the dominance of the private realm over public space (Holyoak, 2004). Like many of the modern developments, iconic structures like Selfridges or Beetham Tower can appear visually more exclusive and private (Kaika & Thielen, 2006), especially if they are tall, and certainly not as freely associative with outdoor vibrancy and culture associated with popular public settings.

Most Disliked	Function	Era	Count	%	Justifications
Beetham Tower	Hotel & Residential	2000's	12	40	Bland / dull
Millennium Point	Museum & Cinema	2000's	9	30	Bland – no identity for a civic building / doesn't seem accessible
Hyatt	Hotel	1990's	7	23	Bland
Library	Civic	1970's	4	13	Ugly / negative associations with modernism
Selfridges	Shopping	2000's	4	13	[Form] doesn't mean anything /will date badly
Rotunda	Residential	1960's	3	10	
Cube	Residential & Leisure	2000's (not yet built)	2	10	Overpowers older buildings and canals
ICC (waterfront)	Conference (Public Atrium)	1990's	2	7	Dull
Curzon St Station	Empty	Victorian	1	3	Cant tell what it is
Mailbox	Shopping	2000's	1	3	'full of yuppies' lacks identity of Brindley Place
V Building	Residential & Leisure	2000's (not yet built)	1	3	Trying to be exciting but failing
Brindley Place	Office & Leisure	1990's	0	0	
Jewellery Qt Terraces	Workshops	Victorian	0	0	
Town Hall	Civic	Victorian	0	0	
Victoria sq	Public Square	1990's (refurbished)	0	0	

Fig. 28 Most Disliked Images

Most Disliked Generic categories	Count	%	Justifications
Bland new glass buildings	17	57	Bland / characterless
Modernist Buildings	6	20	Negative imagery of the past
Tall buildings	6	20	Ruins setting for older buildings
Old stuff	4	12	Stuck in past / Poor image
Bold new designs	2	11	Wont age well / not good enough
80' Buildings	1	3	Out of fashion

Fig. 29 Most disliked images by generic category

Images that were particularly unpopular were mostly buildings such as the Beetham tower or Hyatt which appear to people featureless and 'bland', and not representative of the city or making a bold statement. These are also often and are isolated from the public realm and do not embrace surroundings in the same manner other popular modern developments. The Beetham tower is an excellent example of a building designed to be viewed from a distance as a snapshot on the skyline, where its blue glass cladding is designed to act like a shimmering waterfall; however, up close the building loses this effect and its identity, and also turns its ugly rear side toward the city centre, its popularity suffering as a result.

Without the support of local people and local identity cultural flagship projects can end up becoming bland and seeming contrived, subject to brand decay without the input of organic local culture (McCarthy, 2006, Doucet, 2007, Evans, 2003). The expensive and relatively unsuccessful Millennium Point project is a good example of this; it proved unpopular in the survey, as people criticised its lack of meaning and many were unable to identify its function. Several commented that it was far too bland for an important civic building and lacked the character of Birmingham's other major civic buildings. It also suffers from being isolated from the city core and a place that is relevant to its function and would allow it to be associated with other civic buildings.

The fact that modern 'bland' buildings were extensively disliked illustrates that local people therefore appreciate architectural expression; however there were mixed responses to the outlandish architecture of Selfridges, which won only moderate support. As Hubbard (1996) previously noted in the 1990's, there was still a strong support for the

colourful vernacular red brick, terracotta and classical styles (as to be found at Brindley Place) as they were seen to be more relevant to the city and its character. Diversity is one of the primary identifying features of the city (Balshaw, 2004), and it has been suggested that a range of new and exciting architectural styles should be symbolic of a diverse of culture (Shillam, 2004). However, in practice despite recognition of its bold design, anecdotally people did not seem to necessarily regard Selfridges as being the product of an organic local culture. Several commented that it lacked meaning and was not representative of what the city was really like, however in terms of its symbolic value as a city representative the outcomes were very different, as shall be explained in the next section.

4.3 REPRESENTING THE CITY

Best Representative	Function	Era	Count	%	Justifications
Selfridges	Shopping	2000's	17	57	Brave / 'takes balls' / don't like it but what city wants to show / horrible but stands out/ What people will want to see
Brindley Place	Office & Leisure	1990's	7	23	Vibrant / distinctive to city / markets city to professionals and younger people / can relate to it despite being modern / has living space
Town Hall	Civic	Victorian	7	23	Historical importance and identity / icons need to age before becoming so
Rotunda	Residential	1960's	2	7	Long-standing icon / needs to be old and established to represent city / everyone knows it
Victoria sq	Public Square	1990's (refurbished)	2	7	Symbolises cities change / like the square but images should be buildings so people recognise them
ICC (waterfront)	Conference (Public Atrium)	1990's	2	7	Shows business success / good public and private combination/ good use of canal
Jewellery Qt	Workshops	Victorian	1	3	Historic importance / important identity
Library	Civic	1970's	1	3	Iconic typical of Birmingham
Cube	Residential & Leisure	2000's (not yet built)	0	0	
Beetham Tower	Hotel & Residential	2000's	0	0	
Hyatt	Hotel	1990's	0	0	
Mailbox	Shopping	2000's	0	0	
Millennium Point	Museum & Cinema	2000's	0	0	
V Building	Residential & Leisure	2000's (not yet built)	0	0	

Fig. 30 Images selected to best represent the city

Best Representations Generic	Count	%	Justification
Old and new combinations	8	27	Shows historic identity and progress
New Buildings and new icons	7	23	How city is trying to look – important / need bold new landmarks
Regenerated Public places	5	17	
Older Historic Buildings	3	10	Vital history – Birmingham identity
Buildings that illustrate success	2	7	Need to show city is successful to world
Older Icons (eg Rotunda)	2	7	Buildings need to be older for people to identify with them
Vernacular buildings	2	7	Show Birmingham identity
City living	1	3	

Fig. 31 Generic image categories selected to represent the city

Figures 30 and 31 illustrate which images people wished to represent the city by, in terms of individual and generic types. The key finding here are that the images of the city that people wish to portray as representative differ significantly from the the buildings that they prefer. Though a significant number of people still see the town hall or Brindley Place as desirable symbols through which to represent the city, Selfridges is by far viewed as the most fitting symbol, despite overall not being the preferred building of choice of many people. This is very significant as it demonstrates that despite not personally associating with the building or necessarily appreciating it, people recognise and have accepted the image that the city council has attempted to market the city by, being the one that is most easily and instantly recognisable and the closest thing Birmingham has to an international architectural icon. This also emphasises the fact that people perceive and accept the rhetoric that it is very important to market the city to the outside world in order to attract investment. This is supported by a number of insightful interviewee comments regarding the question of how best to represent the city. A common response was to ask whether this was to show how the respondent would want the city to be represented, or how outsiders would want to see it. Comment regarding representation ranged from

“Do you mean me or how other people will see it? I like Victoria Square but I suppose you should publicise the city with a building like Selfridges”

"people will identify with Selfridges"

"I think that the library is symbolic of Birmingham, but the new stuff like Selfridges is how the city is trying to look which is important"

"I would like Brindley Place to represent the city, but Selfridges is more realistic"

"I like the Town Hall but I guess that's just for me personally"

"Selfridges: I don't like it but it is recognisable"

"Selfridges is horrible but I guess it is a key landmark and it's unique to us"

"people will see the city as the Bull Ring but I like the Town Hall and Jewellery Quarter"

Many people also commented directly upon the fact that it was important to represent the success of the city through new developments.

"Brindley Place and the Mailbox represent good environments to attract new people to the city"

"I think that buildings such as the ICC, Mailbox and Selfridges are good as they represent the success of the city to people"

The vast majority of people therefore saw it as more important that they put forward images that others would relate to and be attracted to rather than what was meaningful and preferable to themselves. Comments illustrate that many respondents recognised that some cultural regeneration projects were fulfilling the interests and needs of tourists and visitors rather than local residents (Doucet, 2007, MacLeod, 2002, Eisinger, 2000), yet fully accepted this as a positive thing for the city; there was little direct praise for the Selfridges building, rather a resigned acceptance or positive endorsement of the fact that it was important to have a recognisable symbol of the city that would sell.

There were several concerns noted that Selfridges was just "fashion" and would not become a lasting and meaningful structure such as the civic buildings like the Town Hall.

"its just a novelty that'll wear off"

"I can see the intention of bold design but its just fashion"

“it is meaningless – its form doesn't represent anything”

Yet despite this complaint the building was still selected by these interviewees as the one to represent city. The perception of this iconic design as just fashion and lacking in meaning was a common theme; one respondent summed up this feeling by exclaiming that

“it's a bit gimmicky really, a let down because its all about all external fashion, not proper vibrant culture like you get with Brindley Place”.

Despite much preferring the mixture of old and new architecture and public squares embedded in the existing urban fabric so popular at Brindley Place, people accept the impact of Selfridges as a visual icon because, it is its 'celebrity' that will sell the city (Sklair, 2006), something put above its local role as a functioning building. Therefore Ironically Selfridges is perceived as iconic by many people only because that is perceived to be how others will judge it, and how the city council, developers and the media have promoted it, rather than because it has adopted a special meaning for the public as long standing icons (Sklair, 2006) such as the Town Hall or Rotunda have . Indeed, conversely it was notable that a significant number of people had initially during the study made reference to the rotunda being an icon of the city, however, when it came to citing it as a good representative the response was much more muted, some feeling that despite its significance to them personally, and its popular historic significance, it wasn't appropriate as a symbol for the city. One respondent stated that

“I think it should be the Rotunda, but that's just personal, and probably relates more to older people who remember it. Therefore I'd say Selfridges”

Responses for the Town Hall are much stronger due to the fact that, despite not being as eminently marketable as Selfridges, it is seen as a building of aesthetic significance that would be presentable on the world stage.

Support for tall buildings	Count	%	Justifications
No	13	43	Damage history / don't relate to context / need landmarks but are anti social – not for local people / will clutter skyline / feel alien / don't need to be like New York / shouldn't copy US its not Birmingham tradition
Depends	12	40	Need to be high quality / if high quality can be good skyline landmarks / need top be integrated properly / don't want too many
Yes	3	10	Can make a big statement for the city / striking skyline important for city to sell itself / don't like them but important for city image
Don't Mind	2	7	

Fig. 32 Interviewee Support for tall buildings in Birmingham

Similar sentiments are also backed up the analysis of people's responses when questioned regarding the relative merits of encouraging the development of tall buildings in the city (see figure 32). There was a general reluctance to accept tall buildings into the city, with concern regarding the impact on the historic environment of the city, local character and the feel of the environment, and the risk of a loss of identity by copying developments of North American cities. However, for many people these concerns were negated by the prospect of building a skyline that could improve the international stature of the city and make it recognisable on the world stage.

"I don't like tall buildings, but the city must have them to be a world city"

"I don't think that they are good for people, but the city needs landmarks"

There were also comments relating back to the discussed findings of Charney (2007), that suggested that despite distrusting tall buildings, people would be prepared to accept them if they were of a very high design standard or of 'iconic' status.

"they must be of bold and striking design"

"we can have them as long as they are visually exciting and act as landmarks on the skyline"

"the are ok if of exceptional quality"

Therefore this re-iterates the point that an awareness of a perceived need to visually promote the city seems to override the concerns that many people have regarding the local visual impacts of new developments. This now leads us into the question of by what terms do people perceive new developments as a whole to be beneficial to the city.

4.4 THE PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF NEW CULTURAL FLAGSHIP DEVELOPMENTS

Finally, almost everybody responded positively when asked if the city had improved over the last 10-20 years. This was also the case when asked if the strategy of redeveloping the city centre in the manner shown could be seen as a positive or negative thing for the city in general. Only a few people chose to question the value of such developments, where as most concentrated upon the fact that the city centre had been made into a much more pleasant and attractive place. This again gives rise to the notion that raising civic pride through spectacle, creating the illusion of prosperity and wealth in the city, whilst diverting attention from real social problems (Evans, 2005, Hubbard, 1996b, Harvey, 1989). Nobody interviewed in this survey linked the development of the city centre with wider social and economic or spending issues, concentrating instead upon issues such as historic preservation or visual amenity. Though they were not prompted or encouraged to do so, the failure of anybody to naturally gravitate toward factors such as this illustrate the fact that concern regarding the cultural and aesthetic development of city centre has masked over issues (Edwards, 1997, Loftman & Nevin, 1996). There remained throughout an acceptance of the notion that even if new developments did not benefit or represent the individual or their social group, then they were at least good and necessary for the city as a whole to prosper in a global climate, and therefore acceptable. If iconic structures represented a positive image of the city to the outside world, that was all that was important despite the fact that these structures may not necessarily be popular or deemed attractive or functionally desirable.

Part 2: Some Comparisons between social and demographic groups

4.5 GROUP COMPARISONS

As has been explained, the sample range utilised during this survey has not been deemed extensive enough to perform a full comparison between social, ethnic and age groups which would allow the analysis of the question as to whether social or individual interpretations are more significant (Smith, 2006, Jiven & Larkham, 2003, Hubbard, 1996a, Hubbard 1996). However figure 33 does highlight and list preferences of the major different social and demographic groups.

From the table it is possible to see that, as predicted there is a correlation between age groups and the preferences of respondents, under 20's preferring newer and more iconic structures where as old people prefer the more historic environment. However, this is not necessarily reflected in terms of what each chose to represent the city, as many converging on similar images such as Brindley Place. The overlap illustrates that developments that integrate fully the existing urban realm are universally liked. There is also a limited correlation between those in the high income bracket and appreciation of newer developments such as Selfridges and the Mailbox.

Sheet1

No	Age	Location	Occupation	Ethnic	Inc	Preferred	Disliked	Best Rep
1	Under 20	Sutton Coldfield	Student	White	low	Brindley Place, V building, cube, vic square	Beetham, Rotunda, Hyatt	Brindley Place
2	40-60	West Bromwich	Housewife	White	middle	Jewellery Quarter, Town Hall Brindley Place	Cube	Selfridges, Town Hall
3	40-60	West Bromwich	Company Director	White	high	ICC, Mailbox	None specified	Brindley Place, ICC
4	20-40	Handsworth Wood	Planner	White	middle	Jewellery Quarter, Vic Sq Rotunda	Millennium point	ICC and Brindley Place
5	20-40	Selly Oak	Lawyer	Arab Iraqi	middle	Town hall, Brindley place, Victoria square, JQ	Selfridges	Mail Box
6	40-60	Smethwick	Factory Worker	White	low	Town Hall Jewellery Quarter	Beetham Tower, Hyatt	Jewellery Quarter
7	40-60	Solihull	Engineer and Designer	White	high	Brindley place, Selfridges, library, Rotunda	ICC, Beetham tower	Brindley place
8	40-60	Sutton Coldfield	Businessman	White	high	Beetham tower, rotunda, mailbox, Selfridges	library	Selfridges
9	Under 20	Sutton Coldfield	Student	White	low	Cube, V building, Selfridges	library	Rotunda, Town Hall
10	40-60	Great Barr	Company Rep	White	middle	Beetham Tower, Rotunda	Selfridges	Selfridges, Rotunda
11	60-80	Kings Norton	Company Director	White	high	Brindley Place	Rotunda, Hyatt	Brindley Place, Selfridges
12	Under 20	Great Barr	Student	White	low	Beetham Tower, Selfridges, Brindley place	None specified	Beetham Tower, Selfridges
13	40-60	Great Barr	Nurse	White	middle	Town Hall, Jewellery Quarter, Rotunda, Brindley	Millennium Point, Mailbox, Hyatt	Brindley Place, Selfridges
14	60-80	Handsworth	Retired	White	low	Town hall, Brindley place	None specified	Brindley Place
15	20-40	Stirchley	Office Clerk	White	middle	Town Hall	Beetham, Millennium Point	Selfridges
16	20-40	Hodge Hill	Admin assistant	White	low	Vic Square, Mailbox, Brindley Place, Rotunda	library	Victoria Square
17	40-60	Hall Green	Secretary	White	middle	Victoria square, Town Hall, Brindley Place	Beetham, Hyatt	Selfridges, Victoria Square
18	80 plus	Erdington	Retired	White	low	Town Hall, Jewellery Quarter	Selfridges	Town Hall
19	40-60	Perry Barr	Office Clerk	White	low	Brindley Place, Town Hall, Victoria Square	Beetham Tower, Hyatt, Millennium Point	Selfridges, Victoria Square

20	40-60	Hall Green	College Vice Principal	White	high	Brindley Place, Town Hall	V building, Beetham	Selfridges, Town Hall
21	20-40	Sutton Coldfield	Student	White	low	V building, Beetham Tower	library	library
22	40-60	Perry Barr	Gardner	White	low	Brindley Place, JQ Mailbox, Town Hall	Beetham Tower, Hyatt, Rotunda	Selfridges, Town Hall
23	20-40	Bournville	Office Clerk	White	low	Town Hall, Victoria Square, Library	Millennium Point, Beetham Tower, Cube and V building	Town Hall
24	80 plus	Sheldon	Retired	White	low	Town Hall, Jewellery Quarter	Beetham, V building	Town Hall
25	20-40	Lozells	Musician	Afro-Caribbean	low	Brindley Place, Selfridges	None specified	Selfridges
26	20-40	Bournville	Secretary	White	low	Town Hall, Jewellery Quarter, Brindley Place, Vic Square	Beetham Tower, Millennium Point	Selfridges
27	20-40	Bordesley Green	Planner	Pakistani	middle	Brindley Place	Beetham	Selfridges
28	20-40	Selly Oak	Student	White	low	Brindley Place, Town Hall Rotunda	Millennium point	Selfridges
29	20-40	Digbeth	office worker	White	middle	Brindley Place, Town Hall, Jewellery Quarter	Millennium Point, Hyatt	Selfridges
30	20-40	Ladywood	office manager	Pakistani	middle	Jewellery Quarter, Town Hall, Victoria Square	Millennium Point, Beetham Tower	Selfridges

Fig. 33 Attributes of interviewees referenced to given responses

5 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1 CRITICAL FINDINGS

This study set out to examine how local residents visually perceive major recent regeneration projects in their city and to investigate the extent to which people support, accept, and feel represented by new architectural forms and buildings marketed as 'iconic' in comparison to the established urban fabric. This overall research aim was then broken down into a series of subsequent questions arising from the literature review which were addressed by the survey and can now be concluded in summary.

The results of the study of visual attitudes have illustrated that people are very accommodating of the some flagship regeneration schemes including Brindley Place and the Mailbox due to the manner in which they endorse the existing fabric of the city centre and notably its historic canal network, something that people see as symbolic of their identity and historic past. The mixture of old and new styles is seen to act as a bridging concept between the old and the new, further endorsed by the use of vernacular references and colourful expressive materials as was suggested (Kaika & Thielen, 2006, Hubbard, 1996, Harvey, 1989). However in particular this juxtaposition between old and new elements appears vital to engaging with popular opinion, as people still feel firmly attached to the older and more historic fabric of the city for their identity yet are reassured and made to feel proud by the perceived prosperity and progress represented by modern additions. The universal acceptance of Brindley Place due to its links with past and future illustrated a greater sense of identification with the city and civic pride (McCarthy, 2006, Miles & Paddison, 2005, Evans, 2005, Loftman & Nevin, 1995), and the rejuvenated canal waterfront seems to act much in the same manner as the Quayside in Gateshead does, as a popular public focus fixed in a place of history and memory (Miles, 2005, Bailey, Miles & Stark, 2004).

In contrast to projects that endorsed the historic environment, others including the iconic glass Beetham Tower and Millennium Point housing Birmingham's science and Industry Museum were seen as bland and meaningless as they were not expressive of the culture of the city (McCarthy, 2006,); although it is notable that this is somewhat dependant upon age, younger people born within the twenty year time frame of the cities regeneration

attempts being more accepting of change. These comments largely reflected their architecture, but also their isolated setting and lack of relation to the city and its historic buildings. The iconic Selfridges buildings met with a mixed response, though was not overly popular; however the most significant finding of the entire survey was that local people's appreciation of this icon centred on the fact that it could be used to sell the city to others as a representation of Birmingham. Despite a lack of appreciation, memories and meaning that structures such as the Rotunda represented, people instead chose Selfridges. This was due to the perceived importance of city image, disconnected as it may be from how they truly saw their city. People therefore appear aware of the significance and specific role of iconic architecture to attract visitors (Doucet, 2007, MacLeod, 2002, Eisinger, 2000), yet fully endorse this, emphasising a complete conscious acceptance of entrepreneurial growth policies, understood by old and young alike to be the only way the city has to move forward. This attitude was summed up in the comments of a retired iron founder in his 70's who stated that

"I like older buildings, they have longevity and don't lose their quality...however Birmingham has lost its industrial fame and needs to reinvent itself, it needs new buildings because that's what people will want to see"

This attitude was also displayed in terms of people's attitudes to tall buildings; despite their general unpopularity iconic design to many makes them acceptable, as Charney (2007) suggested, and also because it was thought that it was important for Birmingham to have a recognisable world city skyline. This illustrates the dominant influence of form over function in terms of support for regeneration in this case. It was supported by people's judgements of pre-conceived icons on the renders that were displayed to them, and was hinted at by their initial choices in the sorting process, although to some function remained significant.

Finally, but highly significantly, the revamping of the city centre, especially aesthetically, was equated by almost all respondents to progress and the general improvement of the city, emphasising how these visual cultural improvements do seem to act as a diversion from other welfare issues (Evans, 2005, Hubbard, 1996b, Harvey, 1989), something which no-one sought to question.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The public, despite the recognised need for social inclusion have little say regarding major projects (Hubbard, 1994), and professional planners are shown to have different associations to architecture than members of the public due to their professional training (Sklair, 2006, Hubbard, 1994, 1996a) therefore it is important to constantly engage opinions through studies such as this. There have been numerous calls for design to address local cultural concerns and address the social aspects of place construction to allow for true acceptance and formation of identity (Colomb, 2007, Porter & Barber, 2007, Ho, 2006, Jiven & Larkham, 2003, Wansborough & Mageean, 2000). The adoption of strategies to implement gradual and incremental change rather than wholesale clearances and blanket redevelopment schemes would aid this. A full endorsement of local culture would also help to reconcile the existing with new residents and aid social cohesion as well as improve civic zeal (Wansborough & Mageean, 2000). Though this study has not set out to analyse impacts upon local culture of regeneration projects in localities, some general comments can be made in terms of the impact of new visual culture upon city residents. The first being that local people related best to developments with public space that integrated themselves into existing elements of the urban fabric and retained existing structures as reference points. Despite the fact that Brindley Place was a large scale comprehensive redevelopment, not necessarily sympathetic to local culture on all terms, it does integrate physically well with its surroundings, which projects such as the Bull Ring do not. It is important that we retain visual reminders of the past as ,older people especially relate to the past and crucially seem to believe that they must endorse a future that does not include or represent them, as it is the only way for the city to economically prosper. As the memories of social and age groups is disrupted by blanket regeneration policies that erase whole sections of the townscape (Short, 2007, Parker & Long, 2003), sensitive incremental change that retains key features of the townscape is very important Parkinson (2007). The respect and acceptance of the visual cultures existing environments, in combination with sensitive new development is the only way in which a greater sense of identification with the city through shared identity rather than acceptance of imposed meanings only relevant to elites (McCarthy, 2006, Miles & Paddison, 2005, Evans, 2005, Loftman & Nevin, 1995). Icons may attract visitors but it is references to place and context, history and memory that appeal to local people and probably to visitors alike.

5.3 FINAL NOTE: OPERTUNITY FOR FUTURE STUDY

The next stage for research would be to extend the survey to examine and compare the opinions regarding iconic developments of residents with tourists and occasional visitors to the city to gauge if preferences, memories and attachments are similar. This would further emphasise if whether or not iconic structures are more effective at attracting outsiders and hold more relevance to them than local people. It would also further highlight the social implications of City Council City branding policies.

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Appendix

The notes transcribed in the appendices represent the recorded comments from in depth interviews. Due to the volume of comments that were originally recorded these notes are significantly abridged compilations that may not correspond word for word with statements or tabulated data.

No.1



2809806946

Location: Sutton Coldfield
Age: U20
Occupation: Student
Ethnicity: White
Income: low

Name 5 buildings in the city.

- New St Station
- Library
- Town Hall
- Cathedral
- St. Paul's Metro Station

...show all 15 images...

Sort images into groups.

- Publicly accessible
- Commercial/private
- Semi-private

Which images do you like, or not like, and why?

- Don't like Beetham Tower, Rotunda, and Hyatt, because they are boring.
- Cube & Arena Central exciting & new – like change.
- Victoria Sq & canals, esp. BrindleyPlace nice – public & vibrant.
- Selfridges bold but ugly – still appreciate design.
- Not bothered by old stuff.

Which image do you feel best represents city?

BrindleyPlace – distinctive public areas important. Doesn't like faceless, private office buildings.

In your view, has Birmingham improved over the last 10-20 years?

City has improved – nicer & safer, esp. Bull Ring & Mailbox.

Has it improved relative to other cities?

Newcastle is better.

Are Cube and Arena Central 'iconic'? Why?

What is 'iconic'? Do you mean landmarks?

Arena Central is boring.

Good for tourists.

To quote Ross Noble, 'Quick, put glass on that'!

Should Birmingham have more tall buildings? Why?

More, as long as they are interesting, & visually exciting from distance.

Skyline important.

What do you think of the Central Library? Why?

Looks rubbish.

Are new developments, such as those shown in the images, good for the city?

Good – couldn't get any worse.

Shows investment.

No. 2

Location: West Bromwich
Age: 40-60
Occupation: Housewife
Ethnicity: White
Income: Middle

Name 5 buildings in the city.

- Town Hall
- Rotunda
- Bull Ring
- Cube
- Mailbox

...show all 15 images...

Sort images into groups.

- Retail
- Public Space
- Don't look nice

Which images do you like, or not like, and why?

- Like old parts – buildings pretty, good composition etc.
- JQ & Town Hall good.
- BrindleyPlace has nice atmosphere and looks OK.
- Don't like new buildings next to old.
- Don't like Cube – design interesting, but in wrong place.

Which image do you feel best represents city?

- People see Birmingham as the Bull Ring, but would like to think the old stuff was representative.

In your view, has Birmingham improved over the last 10-20 years?

- Better because of canals - BrindleyPlace and restaurants.
- Worry that old parts are dying though.
- Some areas too generic.

Has it improved relative to other cities?

- Don't know.

Are Cube and Arena Central 'iconic'? Why?

- Don't like either much.
- Arena Central looks OK in location, cube doesn't.

Should Birmingham have more tall buildings? Why?

- No, they look bad.

What do you think of the Central Library? Why?

- Ugly, eyesore.

Are new developments, such as those shown in the images, good for the city?

- Yes.

No. 3

Location: West Bromwich
Age: 40-60
Occupation: Company Director
Ethnicity: White
Income: High

Name 5 buildings in the city.

- Town Hall
- Library
- Millennium Point
- Bull Ring
- Matthew Boulton College

...show all 15 images...

Sort images into groups.

- Old stuff – nice
- Glass Towers
- Buildings and areas accessible to the public.

Which images do you like, or not like, and why?

- Rotunda – longevity.
- Library – daring.
- Selfridges – brave, bold.
- BrindleyPlace – atmosphere, success.
- Mailbox – functional.
- ICC – success.

Which image do you feel best represents city?

- The images mentioned above, but also canals.
- Public buildings/spaces.

In your view, has Birmingham improved over the last 10-20 years?

- Birmingham has transformed itself beyond recognition.
- World-leading city.
- Focus on city centre.
- Reduced dereliction – more vibrant – esp. Broad St, Gas Street, Mailbox, Bull Ring etc., with public access.
- But does some of this mean other areas of city may suffer?

Has it improved relative to other cities?

- Don't know – other places are different.

Are Cube and Arena Central 'iconic'? Why?

- Cube good – iconic and interesting architecture.
- Arena Central – visually boring, although an interesting idea.

Should Birmingham have more tall buildings? Why?

- Don't care about tall buildings.

What do you think of the Central Library? Why?

- Bold design, fortress-like structure. Not overly imposing, but safe.
- Form and function go together.

Are new developments, such as those shown in the images, good for the city?

- Yes, increasing investment.

No. 4

Location: Handsworth Wood
Age: 20-40
Occupation: Town Planner
Ethnicity: White
Income: Middle

Name 5 buildings in the city.

- Orion
- Selfridges
- Cathedral
- Mailbox
- Town Hall

...show all 15 images...

Sort images into groups.

- By canal
- Around Victoria Sq
- Jewellery Quarter
- Arranged geographically.

Which images do you like, or not like, and why?

- JQ evokes nice feeling, aesthetically pleasing, old.
- Selfridges – landmark & distinctive. Like contrast with old church.
- Rotunda – unique Birmingham landmark.
Like area around canals and Victoria Sq because of space, although some buildings not great but group value of buildings important.
- Mailbox distinctive from front.
- All accessible space good.
- Hate Millennium Point.

Which image do you feel best represents city?

- ICC/canals – exploits resource (canal) successfully, well used by local people and visitors, distinctive part of city.
- ICC good for city – local and global links.
- Public and private space combined well.

In your view, has Birmingham improved over the last 10-20 years?

- Inner ring road broken, opening up access to other parts of city centre.
- Pedestrianisation and improved walking, movement etc.
- More attractive spaces.

Has it improved relative to other cities?

- Better than other cities.
- Used to be famous for being rubbish – has good reputation now.

Are Cube and Arena Central 'iconic'? Why?

- Cube has potential to be iconic, but can't be until it's built and in use.
- Arena Central not particularly special design, and not public building, so setting will make the difference.

Should Birmingham have more tall buildings? Why?

- Nothing against tall buildings, but good buildings and good spaces more important.

What do you think of the Central Library? Why?

- Would be good if could be more 'stand-alone' – ruined by adjoining buildings currently.
- Functionally good.

Are new developments, such as those shown in the images, good for the city?

- Yes, enhancing reputation, but shouldn't be to detriment of history and existing successes.

No. 5

Location: Selly Oak
Age: 20-40
Occupation: Lawyer
Ethnicity: Arab Iraqi
Income: Middle

Name 5 buildings in the city.

- Council House
- Town Hall
- Paradise Forum
- Bull Ring
- St Paul's Sq

...show all 15 images...

Sort images into groups.

- Landmarks
- Residential
- Shopping/entertainment
- By function.

Which images do you like, or not like, and why?

- Town Hall, Vic Sq, BrindleyPlace, Curzon St and JQ good.
- Like 'status' of Selfridges, but don't actually like building that much.
- Like functionality of Mailbox.
- BrindleyPlace and Vic Sq good because of people and vibrancy.
- Like history of JQ and Curzon St Station.
- JQ and Town Hall – history important, like traditional/venacular.
- BrindleyPlace has a good image – young professionals, money etc. Also distinctive because of canals.
- Library also important part of history – important icon.
- Public places also important.

Which image do you feel best represents city?

- Mailbox and BrindleyPlace best represent city.

In your view, has Birmingham improved over the last 10-20 years?

- More investment.

Has it improved relative to other cities?

- Not sure, there is only so much you can do!

Are Cube and Arena Central 'iconic'? Why?

- Recognises images, but limited – very standard visually.

Should Birmingham have more tall buildings? Why?

- Not bothered.

What do you think of the Central Library? Why?

- Don't like building – poor associations with modernist architecture.

Are new developments, such as those shown in the images, good for the city?

- Potentially add to reputation, bringing right jobs.
- Need to generate businesses and build micro-economy.
- Trickle-down good – all brings in money.

No. 6

Smethwick

Location: Sutton Coldfield

Age: U20

Occupation: Student

Ethnicity: White

Income: low

Name 5 buildings in the city.

- Academy
- NIA
- NEC
- Cathedral

...show all 15 images...

Sort images into groups.

- Old traditional stuff
- Nice Environments
- Canals
- Modern design

Which images do you like, or not like, and why?

- Like Victorian buildings like the Town Hall, Jewellery Quarter
- Some new stuff dull – Beetham Tower, ICC, Hyatt
- Like old/new mix these are best

Which image do you feel best represents city?

- Vernacular styles – the Jewellery Quarter
- Anything with both old and new better represents city.

In your view, has Birmingham improved over the last 10-20 years?

- Not made much difference
- Dont like modern stuff
- we need to preserve more

Has it improved relative to other cities?

- I know lots is happening across the country but im not sure if Birmingham is any better

Are Cube and Arena Central 'iconic'? Why?

- No, they ruin their settings

Should Birmingham have more tall buildings? Why?

- No, they dont relate well to their surroundings
- Should re-use existing buildings better.
- Density important – clusters of tall buildings can look good.
- Tall buildings usually private – not for people

What do you think of the Central Library? Why?

- Not great, but built well and fits in – civic presence.

Are new developments, such as those shown in the images, good for the city?

- New stuff showy, but inside/functionally not great. Can't tell what it is.
- New stuff, both visually and functionally, suits younger people, so good for them.
- Pedestrianisation good.
- Millennium Point boring, but Selfridges at least has character.

No. 7

Location: Solihull
Age: 40-60
Occupation: Engineer & designer
Ethnicity: White
Income: High

Name 5 buildings in the city.

- Bull Ring
- Rotunda
- Mailbox
- Cathedral

...show all 15 images...

Sort images into groups.

- Old traditional stuff
- Old and new combined
- Post-war modernist
- Modern design
- Grouped by aesthetic/design features.

Which images do you like, or not like, and why?

- Don't particularly dislike any of them.
- Library great – interesting functionality.
- Old stuff important but uninteresting.
- Love modern design statements – Bull Ring, Rotunda etc.
- Urban Splash good.
- Appreciate canals – BrindleyPlace good.
- Some new stuff dull – Beetham Tower, ICC.
- Like old/new mix.

Which image do you feel best represents city?

- Not Bull Ring.
- Anything with both old and new better represents city.

In your view, has Birmingham improved over the last 10-20 years?

- Renovation of city centre is key – now a nice place.
- ICC, NIA, civic areas bring in visitors & shows off city.
- Need to preserve heritage.

Has it improved relative to other cities?

- Behind London, Manchester, Glasgow – stuck in middle.
- Left out of 'arts'.
- But, very mixed – ethnic diversity. Not represented in images.

Are Cube and Arena Central 'iconic'? Why?

- Iconic in Birmingham, but not globally. Don't make much of a statement.
- Selfridges is iconic.

Should Birmingham have more tall buildings? Why?

- Cities need landmarks, BUT...
- Should re-use existing buildings better.
- Density important – clusters of tall buildings can look good.
- Tall buildings usually private – not for people

What do you think of the Central Library? Why?

- Not great, but built well and fits in – civic presence.

Are new developments, such as those shown in the images, good for the city?

- New stuff showy, but inside/functionally not great. Can't tell what it is.
- New stuff, both visually and functionally, suits younger people, so good for them.
- Pedestrianisation good.
- Millennium Point boring, but Selfridges at least has character.

No. 8

Location: Sutton Coldfield
Age: 40-60
Occupation: Business Man
Ethnicity: White
Income: High

Name 5 buildings in the city.

- Bull Ring
- Selfridges
- Victoria Sq
- Museum
- Town Hall

...show all 15 images...

Sort images into groups.

- Ultra-modern – glass etc. – the 'new' Birmingham.
- Historical stuff (can be isolated)
- BrindleyPlace – post-modern and kitsch – idealised but good.
- 60's modern – Rotunda and Library.

Which images do you like, or not like, and why?

- Beetham Tower – glass-type towers good aesthetically.
- Mailbox good design, and like being in there too.
- Rotunda good – nice to keep old stuff and landmarks important.
- Selfridges good and different, but maybe just fashion?
- Town Hall and Vic Sq good.
- Don't like Curzon St – don't know what it is.
- Library awful – ugly, like Carlisle.

Which image do you feel best represents city?

- Rotunda – important public landmark.
- Selfridges – key iconic landmark.
- Vic Sq & Mailbox also distinctive.

In your view, has Birmingham improved over the last 10-20 years?

- Vastly improved.

Has it improved relative to other cities?

- Not sure.

Are Cube and Arena Central 'iconic'? Why?

- Not distinctive.

Should Birmingham have more tall buildings? Why?

- Tall buildings good.
- Skyline important.
- Buildings need to be striking though.

What do you think of the Central Library? Why?

- Not good functionally or aesthetically.

Are new developments, such as those shown in the images, good for the city?

- Yes – new character, new livability.

No. 9

Location: Sutton Coldfield
Age: 20-40
Occupation: Student
Ethnicity: White
Income: Low

Name 5 buildings in the city.

- Rotunda
- St Chad's
- BT Tower
- Bull Ring
- Mailbox

...show all 15 images...

Sort images into groups.

- 'New' Birmingham & Regeneration
 - Industrial Birmingham
 - Historical Birmingham
- Grouped on 'history' basis.

Which images do you like, or not like, and why?

- New glass/modern stuff good – Cube, Arena Central, Selfridges.
- Dislike library – old stuff not great, outdated.

Which image do you feel best represents city?

- Rotunda – been there ages, distinctive.
- Town Hall old – important.
- Need age/culture (history?) to represent city.
- Identify better with public areas/buildings.

In your view, has Birmingham improved over the last 10-20 years?

- City centre improved – esp. Bull Ring – big change.
- But, some of the changes have had negative effects on other areas.

Has it improved relative to other cities?

- Yes – more shops than most, and more compact.

Are Cube and Arena Central 'iconic'? Why?

- Not build yet.
- Will stand out visually, but people won't relate to them.

Should Birmingham have more tall buildings? Why?

- Depends on what they are going to be used for.
- Probably has enough already, so not too bothered.

What do you think of the Central Library? Why?

- Library dilapidated – should be demolished!

Are new developments, such as those shown in the images, good for the city?

- Good for city – brings it up to date.

No. 10

Location: Great Barr
Age: 40-60
Occupation: Company Rep
Ethnicity: White
Income: High

Name 5 buildings in the city.

- Selfridges
- Town Hall
- Bull Ring
- Library
- BT Tower

...show all 15 images...

Sort images into groups.

- Shops
- Old buildings
- Old landmarks
- New Stuff

Which images do you like, or not like, and why?

- Beetham Tower – fantastic architecture – glass.
- Town Hall great – historical.
- Rotunda is an icon – defines Birmingham. Also important in city's history – pub bombings etc.
- Old stuff nice – nostalgic.
- Don't like Selfridges – doesn't mean anything for city or personally.
- Other modern stuff bland.
- Like Mailbox though.

Which image do you feel best represents city?

- Rotunda represents city for older people – history.
- Younger people may think Selfridges.

In your view, has Birmingham improved over the last 10-20 years?

- Much better – image better, feel more proud.
- Better for local people as well as visitors.

Has it improved relative to other cities?

- Liverpool has improved a lot too, can't say one more than the other.

Are Cube and Arena Central 'iconic'? Why?

- Not striking enough – need to be more impressive and unusual.
- Selfridges more iconic – unusual.
- Lots of similar stuff – maybe trendy rather than iconic.

Should Birmingham have more tall buildings? Why?

- Yes, but need to be well designed, distinctive and architecturally interesting.

What do you think of the Central Library? Why?

- Not pretty, but stands out.
- Uniqueness: important.

Are new developments, such as those shown in the images, good for the city?

- Attracts people and businesses.
- Attracts more people to move in to area.

No. 11

Location: Kings Norton
Age: 60-80
Occupation: Company Director
Ethnicity: White
Income: High

Name 5 buildings in the city.

- Bull Ring
- ICC

...show all 15 images...

Sort images into groups.

- Traditional buildings
- Modern buildings
- Mixed styles (modern and old)

Which images do you like, or not like, and why?

- Likes successful environments – esp. combining old and new. BrindleyPlace works well.
- Environment more important than architecture.
Don't like Rotunda or Hyatt – modern glass buildings are boring.
- Don't always dislike modern – striking, iconic design good.

Which image do you feel best represents city?

- BrindleyPlace – from personal experience, can relate to it.

In your view, has Birmingham improved over the last 10-20 years?

- Not really sure – it has definitely changed.

Has it improved relative to other cities?

- Not sure.

Are Cube and Arena Central 'iconic'? Why?

- Not sure what is 'iconic' – they probably could be with time.

Should Birmingham have more tall buildings? Why?

- Could be good if integrated properly into townscape – can be strong landmarks.

What do you think of the Central Library? Why?

- Don't think it's good architecture.

Are new developments, such as those shown in the images, good for the city?

- New is good but have to build on what's already there.

No. 12

Location: Great Barr
Age: U20
Occupation: Student (school)
Ethnicity: White
Income: Middle

Name 5 buildings in the city.

- Bull Ring
- Rotunda
- (New glass building, the blue one) Beetham Tower

...show all 15 images...

Sort images into groups.

- Old buildings
- New buildings

Which images do you like, or not like, and why?

- Likes unusual buildings like Selfridges.
- Old buildings like Town Hall are pretty.
- Places with people and where you can walk around are good – like BrindleyPlace where Sea Life centre is.

Which image do you feel best represents city?

- Towers are good image – Beetham Tower.

In your view, has Birmingham improved over the last 10-20 years?

- Don't know – probably too young to have a view over time.

Has it improved relative to other cities?

- Not sure.

Are Cube and Arena Central 'iconic'? Why?

- Don't know.

Should Birmingham have more tall buildings? Why?

- Depends – some are OK, but shouldn't have too many.

What do you think of the Central Library? Why?

- Don't really like it – doesn't look nice.

Are new developments, such as those shown in the images, good for the city?

- New stuff is sometimes interesting.

No. 13

Location: Great Barr
Age: 40-60
Occupation: Nurse
Ethnicity: White
Income: Middle

Name 5 buildings in the city.

- Town Hall
- Council House
- Selfridges
- Rotunda
- The Bull (sculpture)

...show all 15 images...

Sort images into groups.

- Old buildings
- Nice new stuff (vibrant public places)
- Modern bland stuff
- Iconic buildings

Which images do you like, or not like, and why?

- Like things with historical value – JQ and Town Hall.
- Nice environments – BrindleyPlace.
- Rotunda – nostalgic.
- BrindleyPlace has good mix of old and new.
- Don't like Millennium Point – no meaning.
- Mailbox – full of yuppies – exclusive?

Which image do you feel best represents city?

- Would like it to be BrindleyPlace, but think realistically it's probably Selfridges.

In your view, has Birmingham improved over the last 10-20 years?

- It's more cosmopolitan, yes.

Has it improved relative to other cities?

- Modern/regenerated bits are better than Liverpool, but old parts of Liverpool are better.

Are Cube and Arena Central 'iconic'? Why?

- No. Icons can destroy/dominate setting.

Should Birmingham have more tall buildings? Why?

- No, not necessary.

What do you think of the Central Library? Why?

- Don't like it as a building, but like the civic space around it.

Are new developments, such as those shown in the images, good for the city?

- Some are good, but can lose identity with too much new/generic stuff. Need to keep it unique.
- BrindleyPlace has proper vibrancy and culture, whereas Selfridges is a novelty and won't last.

No. 14

Location: Handsworth
Age: 60-80
Occupation: Retired
Ethnicity: White
Income: Low

Name 5 buildings in the city.

- Rotunda
- New Street Station
- BT Tower
- Rag Market
- NIA

...show all 15 images...

Sort images into groups.

- Old buildings (Curzon St, Town Hall, JQ)
- Old but modernised parts.
- New innovations
- Boring modern buildings.

Which images do you like, or not like, and why?

- Like mix of old and new, but mainly like older buildings – longevity, established icons like Town Hall.
- BrindleyPlace mixes new stuff with old (canals) well.

Which image do you feel best represents city?

- Mix of old and new – BrindleyPlace.

In your view, has Birmingham improved over the last 10-20 years?

- City has moved on, but is lacking identity.
- Needs new identity after loss of major industries.
- Need more mixed old and new developments for local people – a lot of stuff is for tourists.

Has it improved relative to other cities?

- Feels like it's moving forward and will be on a par with everything else.

Are Cube and Arena Central 'iconic'? Why?

- Yes, they stand out.

Should Birmingham have more tall buildings? Why?

- Depends – distinctive skyline that stands out is important.

What do you think of the Central Library? Why?

- Not really sure, have never been inside.

Are new developments, such as those shown in the images, good for the city?

- New stuff is needed for, and is a sign of, change.
- Much of it is not for me, but it's still important.

No. 15

Location: Stirchley
Age: 20-40
Occupation: Office clerk
Ethnicity: White
Income: Middle

Name 5 buildings in the city.

- Bull ring
- Library
- Alpha Tower
- Baskerville House
- Town Hall

...show all 15 images...

Sort images into groups.

- Classical
- Vernacular
- Modern
- Stand-out design

Which images do you like, or not like, and why?

- Like classical, like Town Hall.
- Don't like modern glass – bland.

Which image do you feel best represents city?

- New modern mixture – bold design, like Selfridges.
- But this is just fashion...

In your view, has Birmingham improved over the last 10-20 years?

- Yes, smarter and cleaner.
- Visually smart.
- Restoring old stuff good.

Has it improved relative to other cities?

- Birmingham took the lead – better than other cities.

Are Cube and Arena Central 'iconic'? Why?

- They could become iconic because of design, but not iconic yet.

Should Birmingham have more tall buildings? Why?

- If in the right place. They can look good.

What do you think of the Central Library? Why?

- Looks dated, doesn't fit in.

Are new developments, such as those shown in the images, good for the city?

- In general they are good.
- New investment attracts people and helps Birmingham compete with rest of country.

No. 16

Location: Hodge Hill
Age: 20-40
Occupation: Office Clerk
Ethnicity: White
Income: Low

Name 5 buildings in the city.

- Town Hall
- Rotunda
- Old Post Office
- St Chad's

...show all 15 images...

Sort images into groups.

- Traditional/old
- Contemporary
- Leftfield

Which images do you like, or not like, and why?

- Victoria Sq – like the buildings and the area around.
- Don't like the stuff that hasn't been built yet – can't tell what they are going to look like.
- Mailbox, BrindleyPlace & Rotunda good – distinctive.
- Really dislike Library.

Which image do you feel best represents city?

- Victoria Sq – vibrant, heart of the city.

In your view, has Birmingham improved over the last 10-20 years?

- Yes, significantly, but has some old parts of the city lost.

Has it improved relative to other cities?

- Not sure.

Are Cube and Arena Central 'iconic'? Why?

- Both distinctive – could be important and iconic.

Should Birmingham have more tall buildings? Why?

- Tall buildings are good if distinctive and attractive.

What do you think of the Central Library? Why?

- Really hate it – ugly, bad image for city.

Are new developments, such as those shown in the images, good for the city?

- They make the city look good.

No. 17

Location: Hall Green
Age: 40-60
Occupation: Secretary
Ethnicity: White
Income: Middle

Name 5 buildings in the city.

- Rotunda
- Brindley Place
- Town Hall
- Moor Street Station
- Selfridges

...show all 15 images...

Sort images into groups.

- Stuff that looks old or is made to look old
- Public buildings (but not including Library – it doesn't look right with others).
- 70's era stuff.
- Eye-catching/sparkly/prestigious (not necessarily nice).

Which images do you like, or not like, and why?

- Victoria Sq - especially like Council House and fountains which isn't shown in images.
- Like JQ image and look of area generally. Also, historically important.
- New stuff often/mostly bland.
- Like Selfridges combined with St. Martins – mix of old and new – but it wouldn't look so good on its own.
- Like feeling of BrindleyPlace.

Which image do you feel best represents city?

- Rotunda – everyone knows it, it's unique and has historic resonance.
- Also, Selfridges as its it widely recognised although not necessarily well liked.
- Town Hall is attractive, but could be anywhere.
- BrindleyPlace stands out.

In your view, has Birmingham improved over the last 10-20 years?

- Improved tremendously – proud to take visitors, lots to do and more culture, esp. around canals.

Has it improved relative to other cities?

- Birmingham better because of the new spaces.

Are Cube and Arena Central 'iconic'? Why?

- Eye-catching, bit don't like them.

Should Birmingham have more tall buildings? Why?

- No – they are alien and impersonal.

What do you think of the Central Library? Why?

- Don't like – not keen on 60s stuff, looks like a car park.

Are new developments, such as those shown in the images, good for the city?

- Yes – certain areas need to change because they aren't relevant any more, but some of the new stuff won't age well.

No. 18

Location: Erdington
Age: 80+
Occupation: Retired
Ethnicity: White
Income: Low

Name 5 buildings in the city.

- Town Hall
- Council House
- Art Gallery

...show all 15 images...

Sort images into groups.

- Old
- New

Which images do you like, or not like, and why?

- Like old stuff.
- New stuff boring – no detail -Hyatt
- Old people feel out of touch with new buildings.
- Things need to be pleasant to look at, not just boxes.
- Hate Selfridges.

Which image do you feel best represents city?

- Something old, like Town Hall.

In your view, has Birmingham improved over the last 10-20 years?

- Getting better – some of the newer stuff is interesting.
- Everyone has their 'era', so it's better for some than others.

Has it improved relative to other cities?

- Don't really know, it's certainly more cosmopolitan and caters for more people.

Are Cube and Arena Central 'iconic'? Why?

- Like Arena Central – interesting design, so could be iconic.

Should Birmingham have more tall buildings? Why?

- No – don't like all the glass and think towers are ugly.

What do you think of the Central Library? Why?

- Library is good – it fits in well where it is.

Are new developments, such as those shown in the images, good for the city?

- Buildings are good for some people, but not really for old people.
- Need more of a mix.

No. 19

Location: Perry Barr
Age: 40-60
Occupation: Office Manager
Ethnicity: White
Income: Middle

Name 5 buildings in the city.

- Bull Ring
- BrindleyPlace
- Park Central
- Witton Lodge
- Alexander Stadium

...show all 15 images...

Sort images into groups.

- Tall, modern, bland.
- Heritage & re-use in modern settings
- Striking – Selfridges & Library. Building that provoke a reaction.
- Bland blocks – Mailbox, Hyatt etc.
- Canal – ICC.

Which images do you like, or not like, and why?

- Like re-use of old buildings, or old referencing like at BrindleyPlace.
- Like iconic 'Birmingham' buildings – Town Hall, old Post Office – mostly because of personal experience, but also because of media exposure and good architecture.
- Canals and BrindleyPlace nice – good open space.
- Library good, but would look better if clad.
- Not sure about Selfridges – it's definitely brave.
- Modern stuff bland – Hyatt
- Dont like selfridges

Which image do you feel best represents city?

- For me, Victoria Sq is a good representation, but maybe Selfridges is a better image.

In your view, has Birmingham improved over the last 10-20 years?

- Yes – takes people and pedestrians into account a lot better.
- Nice public space which pulls city together.
- Drive to modernise – more confidence.

Has it improved relative to other cities?

- Not really sure, don't visit many other cities.

Are Cube and Arena Central 'iconic'? Why?

- Not sure. Look boring at the moment, need to wait until they are built.

Should Birmingham have more tall buildings? Why?

- Need to be careful where they are put so that it still looks like Birmingham.

What do you think of the Central Library? Why?

- As a building it's OK, but not so good as a Library.

Are new developments, such as those shown in the images, good for the city?

- They can be good, but like to see re-use of existing buildings too to preserve history.

No. 20

Location: Hall Green
Age: 40-60
Occupation: College Vice Principal
Ethnicity: White
Income: High

Name 5 buildings in the city.

- Town Hall
- Council House
- Library
- Cathedral
- Selfridges

...show all 15 images...

Sort images into groups.

- Old stuff.
- 70s stuff.
- Modern stuff.
- Canal stuff.

Which images do you like, or not like, and why?

- Old stuff good – Town Hall etc.
- Canals quite good – community space, meeting places etc. around BrindleyPlace and Mailbox.
- Modern ones private – don't much like them – 'Clive Dutton Spires' – Beetham or Hyatt
- Selfridges very identifiable.

Which image do you feel best represents city?

- People will identify with Selfridges, but Rotunda also important.

In your view, has Birmingham improved over the last 10-20 years?

- Has improved phenomenally – unrecognisable.

Has it improved relative to other cities?

- Yes, it has. But Liverpool has more good C19th buildings.

Are Cube and Arena Central 'iconic'? Why?

- Yes, they are iconic, but I don't like them.

Should Birmingham have more tall buildings? Why?

- To be a world city, need to have tall buildings.

What do you think of the Central Library? Why?

- Don't like it – 60s rubbish.

Are new developments, such as those shown in the images, good for the city?

- Nothing bad about them – city can't stand still, but must have more communal spaces. Lots of new stuff is private.

No. 21

Location: Sutton Coldfield
Age: 20-40
Occupation: Student
Ethnicity: White
Income: Low

Name 5 buildings in the city.

- Rotunda
- Library
- Selfridges
- Beetham Tower
- Town Hall

...show all 15 images...

Sort images into groups.

- Old Birmingham
- New developments
- Water stuff

Which images do you like, or not like, and why?

- Don't really like old stuff.
- New buildings look nice – fashionable.
- Library is naff, and 80s stuff around BrindleyPlace naff too.
- All aesthetic reasons.

Which image do you feel best represents city?

- Library is symbolic of Birmingham.
- New stuff is how city is trying to look.
- City living is a good representation of how city centre is changing.

In your view, has Birmingham improved over the last 10-20 years?

- More stuff to do, looks better, more shops and bars.

Has it improved relative to other cities?

- Birmingham has less far to come – Newcastle has come further.

Are Cube and Arena Central 'iconic'? Why?

- Cube good & iconic.
- Arena Central boring.
- But city needs flagship buildings – innovation needed.

Should Birmingham have more tall buildings? Why?

- People like tall, impressive buildings.
- Need to make sure they are nice to look at.

What do you think of the Central Library? Why?

- Can appreciate architectural importance, but don't like it.

Are new developments, such as those shown in the images, good for the city?

- Need stuff to attract people and keep people in Birmingham.
- Need to change image of Birmingham.

No. 22

Location: Perry Barr
Age: 40-60
Occupation: Gardener
Ethnicity: White
Income: Middle

Name 5 buildings in the city.

- Town Hall
- Council House
- Selfridges
- St Phillips
- Alpha Tower

...show all 15 images...

Sort images into groups.

- Historical/Victorian (pre C20th)
- 1960s
- Regenerated 1960s (Mailbox)
- Modern (last 20 years)
- Not built.

Which images do you like, or not like, and why?

- Can't really comment on the ones which haven't been built.
- Don't like Rotunda – it is iconic but not really attractive.
- Modern stuff bland.
- Library & Selfridges – distinctive.
- BrindleyPlace feels good.
- Mailbox is a good re-use of existing building.
- Historic stuff and JQ attractive.

Which image do you feel best represents city?

- Selfridges and Town Hall are Birmingham icons, epitomise combination of old and new.

In your view, has Birmingham improved over the last 10-20 years?

- Yes – public space opened up and ties parts of city centre together, esp. Victoria sq and Centenary Sq.
- New Bull Ring also important.

Has it improved relative to other cities?

- Don't like Manchester as much as Birmingham.
- Bull Ring and public squares unique.

Are Cube and Arena Central 'iconic'? Why?

- No, not iconic. Term used too freely.

Should Birmingham have more tall buildings? Why?

- Only if they are good quality and in the right places.

What do you think of the Central Library? Why?

- Have grown to tolerate it. But could be genuinely iconic if was properly finished.

Are new developments, such as those shown in the images, good for the city?

- Generally positive.
- Modernised, but not wholesale like in the 60s.
- Some sub-standard architecture – not really innovative.
- Canal area and BrindleyPlace great.
- Can't get locked in the past. Proud that city is leading the way in regeneration.

No. 23

Location: Bournville
Age: 20-40
Occupation: Office Clerk
Ethnicity: White
Income: Low

Name 5 buildings in the city.

- Library
- Bull Ring
- New Street Station
- Cathedral
- Corporation Street

...show all 15 images...

Sort images into groups.

- Public space
- Individual buildings making statements of ambition (Selfridges, Library)
- Individual buildings failing to make any statement – bland.

Which images do you like, or not like, and why?

- No opinion on Cube or Arena Central – not build yet.
- Vic Sq, Town Hall & Library all good.
- JQ – heritage.
- Selfridges good because it's bold & can be seen from far off.
- BrindleyPlace & Mailbox are good places/spaces.
- Modern glass buildings boring.
- Millennium Point is rubbish – tries to hard and doesn't relate to other buildings.

Which image do you feel best represents city?

- Personally, Curzon St a good representation, but Town Hall probably more widely recognised, because has history.

In your view, has Birmingham improved over the last 10-20 years?

- Yes, although peaked with opening of Bull Ring.
- Some of the newest developments look cheap.
- Danger of going too far and losing too much history.

Has it improved relative to other cities?

- Don't know enough about other cities.

Are Cube and Arena Central 'iconic'? Why?

- Can't label something as an icon, it just happens.

Should Birmingham have more tall buildings? Why?

- Depends on merit of building – they are not a necessary characteristic of Birmingham.

What do you think of the Central Library? Why?

- Important and interesting – few genuinely important buildings in city.
- Good use of space and light.

Are new developments, such as those shown in the images, good for the city?

- Generally positive – can change attitudes.

No. 24

Location: Sheldon
Age: 80+
Occupation: Retired
Ethnicity: White
Income: Low

Name 5 buildings in the city.

- Town Hall
- Symphony Hall
- Bull Ring
- St Philips

...show all 15 images...

Sort images into groups.

- New buildings
- Traditional/old buildings
- Other – Victoria Sq, Canals.

Which images do you like, or not like, and why?

- Like JQ and Town Hall best – older style of buildings.
- Know BrindleyPlace is good – like being able to walk by canals.
- Not keen on tall glass buildings – Beetham Tower.

Which image do you feel best represents city?

- Town Hall or Victoria Sq are best.

In your view, has Birmingham improved over the last 10-20 years?

- I don't know it so well, but it's easier to walk around and looks clean.

Has it improved relative to other cities?

- Not sure.

Are Cube and Arena Central 'iconic'? Why?

- They look very modern – probably will stand out.

Should Birmingham have more tall buildings? Why?

- If they look nice and are needed the yes.

What do you think of the Central Library? Why?

- It's not as nice as the one that was there before.

Are new developments, such as those shown in the images, good for the city?

- They make the city look new – don't want to get stuck in the past.

No. 25

Location: Lozells
Age: 20-40
Occupation: Musician
Ethnicity: Black
Income: Low

Name 5 buildings in the city.

- Selfridges
- BrindleyPlace
- Library
- Custard Factory
- Alpha Tower

...show all 15 images...

Sort images into groups.

- Big/iconic – Mailbox, Hyatt, Millennium Point, Arena Central, Cube
- Historical buildings – JQ, Curzon St
- Public spaces – BrindleyPlace, Vic Sq.

Which images do you like, or not like, and why?

- New buildings – Cube and Arena Central.
- BrindleyPlace and canals are important.
- Don't like Millennium Point.

Which image do you feel best represents city?

- Selfridges shows the city really well.

In your view, has Birmingham improved over the last 10-20 years?

- Yes – easier to get around city centre and better links to places like JQ, Digbeth etc.

Has it improved relative to other cities?

- Probably.

Are Cube and Arena Central 'iconic'? Why?

- Yes. They look pretty impressive.

Should Birmingham have more tall buildings? Why?

- Yes.

What do you think of the Central Library? Why?

- Good building but needs improving.

Are new developments, such as those shown in the images, good for the city?

- Yes, definitely. They attract more people to the city.

No. 26

Location: Bournville
Age: 20-40
Occupation: Secretary
Ethnicity: White
Income: Low

Name 5 buildings in the city.

- Selfridges
- Town Hall
- Council House
- Library
- St. Philips

...show all 15 images...

Sort images into groups.

- Tall buildings (Hyatt, Beetham Tower, Arena Central)
- Old buildings – JQ, Town Hall, Curzon St, Vic Sq
- Modern/unusual buildings – Selfridges, ICC.

Which images do you like, or not like, and why?

- Area around canals – BrindleyPlace etc. – very attractive.
- Generally prefer old buildings like those in JQ. Also really like Town Hall & Vic Sq area.
- Public squares are important as well as the buildings.
- Don't like Millennium Point or Beetham Tower much – not a fan of modern glass buildings.

Which image do you feel best represents city?

- Selfridges is always used, but I like Town Hall and Council House (not shown) more.

In your view, has Birmingham improved over the last 10-20 years?

- I didn't really know Birmingham until recently, but know that a lot of things in the city centre are new.

Has it improved relative to other cities?

- Some of the regeneration schemes are ahead of those in other cities, but the older parts of the city aren't so good as Leeds.

Are Cube and Arena Central 'iconic'? Why?

- They are distinctive, although not really my taste.
- Can only become iconic with time.

Should Birmingham have more tall buildings? Why?

- Only if they are good buildings in the right place – they shouldn't be to the detriment of existing buildings, esp. historically important or attractive ones.

What do you think of the Central Library? Why?

- Can understand it's importance architecturally, and in the right place might look better.
- Doesn't match the older, surrounding buildings that well.

Are new developments, such as those shown in the images, good for the city?

- Depending what they are for, then probably yes. The make it look modern and exciting.

No. 27

Location: Bordesley Green
Age: 20-40
Occupation: Regeneration Officer
Ethnicity: Pakistani
Income: Middle

Name 5 buildings in the city.

- Bull Ring
- Selfridges
- Mailbox
- Alpha Tower
- Council House

...show all 15 images...

Sort images into groups.

- Buildings open to the public – Library, Town Hall, BrindleyPlace, Millennium Point etc.
- Private buildings – Beetham Tower, Hyatt, Arena Central etc.

Which images do you like, or not like, and why?

- Like BrindleyPlace, Mailbox, Canals/ICC, Victoria Sq as I use them or the immediate areas.
- Don't like Beetham Tower – it's distinctive, but looks closed off from street.

Which image do you feel best represents city?

- Bull Ring & Selfridges are a really good image.

In your view, has Birmingham improved over the last 10-20 years?

- Yes. New developments like Bull Ring and Mailbox are great.
- More restaurants and shops make it a better place to visit – more to do.

Has it improved relative to other cities?

- Yes. It's ahead of a lot of places.

Are Cube and Arena Central 'iconic'? Why?

- Yes. They will both really stand out.
- Cube because its unusual and distinctive.
- Arena Central because it's tall, and interesting shape.

Should Birmingham have more tall buildings? Why?

- Yes. It needs to have a good image to compete with other big cities.

What do you think of the Central Library? Why?

- Don't like it – ugly, dated, don't like 60s concrete blocks.

Are new developments, such as those shown in the images, good for the city?

- Yes – better for image of city.

No. 28

Location: Selly oak
Age: 20-40
Occupation: Student
Ethnicity: Mixed
Income: Middle

Name 5 buildings in the city.

- Town Hall
- Cathedral
- Library
- Council House
- Telephone Exchange (Newhall St)

...show all 15 images...

Sort images into groups.

- Historic buildings – JQ, Town Hall, Curzon St.
- Iconic buildings – Selfridges, Cube, Arena Central, Beetham Tower.
- Public places – BrindleyPlace, Vic Sq.
- Other modern buildings – Millennium Point.

Which images do you like, or not like, and why?

- Like BrindleyPlace – mixes in with urban fabric, good mix of old and new.
- Town Hall good.
- Rotunda good – has meaning and has been there a long time.
- Don't like Millennium Point – not attractive or accessible.

Which image do you feel best represents city?

- Selfridges – people recognise it.

In your view, has Birmingham improved over the last 10-20 years?

- Yes – there's more investment and more people are attracted to the city centre.

Has it improved relative to other cities?

- Yes – it is a set ahead. New things have been built sooner.
- But started with worse reputation so more to change.

Are Cube and Arena Central 'iconic'? Why?

- No, not yet. Will depend on how people see them once they are built.

Should Birmingham have more tall buildings? Why?

- A good/distinctive skyline is important, but I don't like tall buildings that much.

What do you think of the Central Library? Why?

- It's a really good design, but needs refurbishing coz it's in a poor state.
- It's iconic and distinctive – unique for the city.

Are new developments, such as those shown in the images, good for the city?

- Yes, they attract more investment.

No. 29

Location: Digbeth (City Centre)
Age: 20-40
Occupation: Administrator
Ethnicity: White
Income: Middle

Name 5 buildings in the city.

- Town Hall
- Bull Ring
- Custard Factory
- Academy
- New Street Station

...show all 15 images...

Sort images into groups.

- Old buildings.
- Modern buildings
- Public places

Which images do you like, or not like, and why?

- Like Town Hall – attractive and strong.
- JQ image attractive building.
- BrindleyPlace is a good public space.
- Don't like Millennium Point or Hyatt that much.

Which image do you feel best represents city?

- Selfridges – it's distinctive and widely recognised.
- Also Town Hall – nicer to look at and has more history.

In your view, has Birmingham improved over the last 10-20 years?

- Yes – has become more attractive as a whole, but especially more opportunities for living in city centre.

Has it improved relative to other cities?

- It's good compared to a lot of places, although Cardiff has maybe improved more. Not really sure though coz they are quite different.

Are Cube and Arena Central 'iconic'? Why?

- Yes, they look good.

Should Birmingham have more tall buildings? Why?

- In the right places they are good, but shouldn't compromise buildings like Town Hall and historical stuff.

What do you think of the Central Library? Why?

- Don't like it - not a fan of concrete stuff.

Are new developments, such as those shown in the images, good for the city?

- Yes.

No. 30

Location: Ladywood (City Centre)
Age: 20-40
Occupation: Office Manager
Ethnicity: White
Income: Middle

Name 5 buildings in the city.

- Town Hall
- Council House
- BT Tower
- BrindleyPlace
- Library

...show all 15 images...

Sort images into groups.

- Old/heritage buildings.
- Modern (inc. glass towers) buildings
- Public spaces

Which images do you like, or not like, and why?

- Prefer images including older buildings – JQ, Town Hall, Vic Sq.
- Not keen on 'stand-alone' buildings like Millennium Point, Beetham Tower etc. as they don't integrate with environment so well.
- Will be interesting to see how new developments like Cube & Arena Central are integrated with existing buildings and routes.

Which image do you feel best represents city?

- Selfridges is most widely recognised.

In your view, has Birmingham improved over the last 10-20 years?

- Yes – easier to walk around and a better place to live.

Has it improved relative to other cities?

- Yes, although it probably started from a lower point.

Are Cube and Arena Central 'iconic'? Why?

- Can't really designate something as iconic, but they are interesting and have the potential to become iconic.

Should Birmingham have more tall buildings? Why?

- Not sure. Tall buildings in the right place are OK, but not a necessity.

What do you think of the Central Library? Why?

- It's quirky. Would be a shame to lose it, but equally it doesn't necessarily work all that well at the moment.

Are new developments, such as those shown in the images, good for the city?

- Yes, they bring people – and money – to the city.